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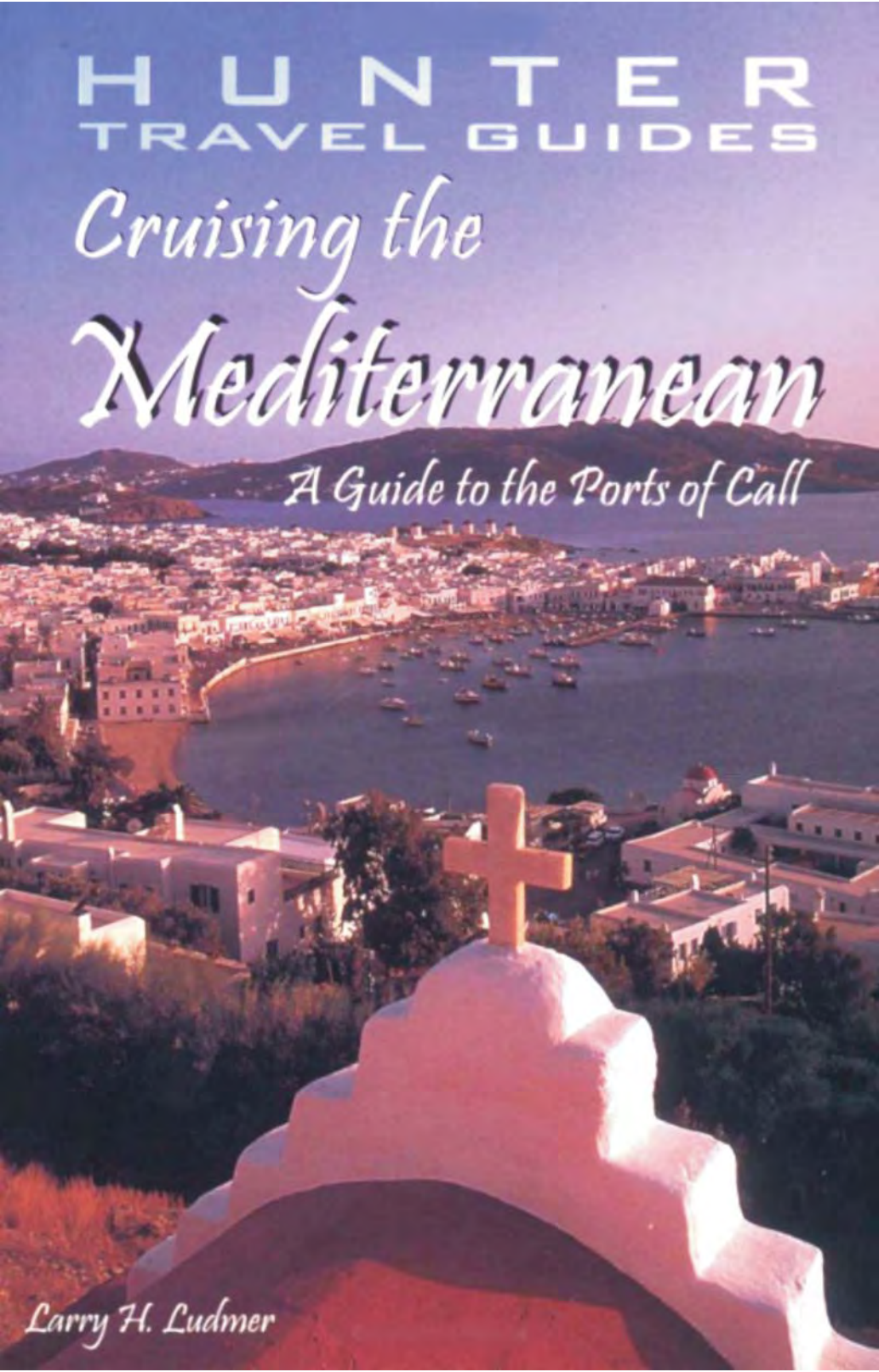
Cruising the Mediterranean

A Guide to the Ports of Call



Larry H. Ludmer

VISIT…

Cruising the Mediterranean

A Guide to the Ports of Call

2nd Edition

HUNTER

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Acknowledgments

The seemingly simple task of compiling the facts about cruise lines, their ships, and destinations for presentation to the reader has become more and more difficult because of the sheer volume of choices. Any travel writer who wants to do the best for his readers must seek out the assistance of others to help amass this information. Ship facts and information on which ships have been assigned to cruising Mediterranean routes were provided by the media relations staff of the cruise lines. It is important to note, however, that their role in providing information and/or services to me in no way affects what I have to say about a particular cruise line or ship. Having said that I am still especially grateful to and would like to acknowledge the special help and consideration that has been provided to me by Karen Tetherow and Susanne Ferrull of Princess Cruises; Michelle McCarthy of Holland America; Jaye Hilton of Royal Caribbean; Elizabeth Jakeway of Celebrity Cruises; Heather Krasnow of Norwegian Cruise Line; Irene Lui of Carnival Cruises, Cheryl Fenske of DMOA Public Relations for MSC Cruises; and Darren Osta of Costa Cruises. All opinions expressed here are based on information gathered from a variety of objective sources and, most importantly, by firsthand experience.

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Preface

There are two reasons why this was a good time to introduce a new edition of *Cruising the Mediterranean*. To begin with, the constantly evolving cruise industry means new ships with an ever-increasing array of new amenities, new ports of call and new itineraries. In the case of the Mediterranean market, the changes are even more pronounced than in other popular cruising areas. That's because when the first edition was released, it was soon followed by significant events of a geopolitical nature. First came the *intifada*. It didn't take long for most cruise lines to start eliminating Middle Eastern ports from their itineraries and those that didn't (at least among lines catering to American visitors) followed suit after the terrible events of 9/11. Although travel to Europe by Americans has rebounded nicely, the cruise lines have shown a great hesitancy to return to the Middle East.

The other reason for a new edition is that, as I write new cruise guides or revised guides for other cruising markets, I am always tinkering with format, style and content changes. I like to think that each edition becomes better for you, the reader and user. This edition reflects many of those changes and I hope that you find them useful.

The World of Mediterranean Cruising

Cruise Popularity

It wasn't very long ago that cruising was an activity almost exclusively limited to people with lots of money to spend on their leisure time. While the number of people taking cruises has seen growth that is nothing short of spectacular over the past decade, a lot of people still think cruising is for the rich and famous. Studies done by the cruise industry indicate that only about three percent of Americans have ever taken a cruise. If, after reading this book, you become one of the travelers who starts working that figure towards four percent or higher, then my objective will have been fulfilled.

Cruising represents one of the fastest-growing segments of the travel industry, a trend that has continued to gain momentum in recent years. Preliminary figures show that during 2004 about 11 million people worldwide took a cruise. By far the largest segment of the cruising public resides in the United States. The total number of cruisers is expected to continue taking huge leaps – to almost 14 million in 2006. In fact, annual increases in the range of 15-20% are anticipated over the next few years. Although the Caribbean market simply dwarfs all other cruise market segments (in 2004 it represented more than 40% of all North American cruise passengers), cruising to the Mediterranean has certainly become a significant chunk of the market, representing almost 13% of the total and putting it in second place after the Caribbean. During this period, a total of more than 1.25 million people embarked on one of more than 250 cruises in the Mediterranean offered by Cruise Line International Association Members. That figure does not count passengers on trans-Atlantic itineraries nor a sizable number of passengers cruising to other parts of Europe whose ship visited one or more Mediterranean ports of call. The passenger count in the Mediterranean alone represented an increase of nearly 18% over 2003. Given the continued increases in both the number and size of ships on Mediterranean routes in 2005 (and planned for in future years), it wouldn't be sur-

prising for double-digit increases to remain the norm over the next several years.

There are many reasons why cruising has become so popular. Certainly one of the biggest factors is that today's cruise ships offer excellent value for whatever level of luxury your budget will bear. Cost factors will be explored in more detail later, but suffice to say for now that a typical week-long cruise in the Mediterranean should cost you considerably less than the same period of time at good land-based hotels when all of the costs are calculated. Air, of course, will be about the same whether you cruise in the Mediterranean or fly to Europe for a land tour. Other things that attract people to cruising are the variety of activities available on these floating resorts; the fact that it is a comprehensive vacation; and the romanticism and luxury associated with the cruising experience. The ability to see several different and often exotic ports of call in a single vacation is also, no doubt, an important factor. This becomes even more important in locations such as Europe since some Americans feel uncomfortable touring the region on their own because of language and cultural differences. If you let the cruise line handle all or most of your shore time activities, that removes much of the hassle and uncertainty that can often accompany foreign travel.

A Survey of the Mediterranean

A trip to any foreign country will be enhanced if you have some knowledge of that nation's history, land and people. This section will provide a general introduction to these topics. It is not intended to be comprehensive and interested potential cruisers to the Mediterranean are strongly encouraged to do further reading.

Geographically Speaking

The region of Europe and North Africa referred to as the "Mediterranean" encompasses the Mediterranean Sea and the land areas immediately surrounding it. This includes all or part of almost 20 nations on three continents. The Mediterranean Sea stretches for nearly 2,400 miles from the ancient Pillars of Hercules between modern day Gibraltar and Morocco in the west to the shores of Israel in the east. At its widest point, it measures about 1,000 miles, although it is more commonly just 400 to 600 miles across. Covering approximately 970,000 square miles, the Mediterranean is the seventh-largest body of water in the world. The only bigger ponds are the four

oceans, the South China Sea and the Caribbean Sea, which is only about 2,300 square miles larger than the Mediterranean. The name Mediterranean comes from Latin and means "the middle land." Given its location between Europe, Africa and Asia that is, indeed, a most appropriate title.

The Mediterranean is almost entirely landlocked. The narrow 40-mile-long Strait of Gibraltar, a mere nine to 24 miles across, defines its westernmost limits, allowing access to the Atlantic Ocean. At the other end, the Mediterranean is connected to the Black Sea by the nearly 200-mile-long waterway through Turkey comprised of the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara and the Bosporus. Geographically, the Black and Mediterranean Seas are hard to separate. Many people, including some scholars, consider the Black Sea to be a part of the Mediterranean. But true geographers scoff at that view. Besides the Strait of Gibraltar there is only one other outlet to the ocean: the man-made **Suez Canal**, which crosses the Isthmus of Suez and provides access to the Indian Ocean via the Red Sea.

The Mediterranean has several "arms" that go by other names and are often large enough to be called seas in their own right. These are the **Tyrrhennian Sea**, the **Adriatic Sea**, the **Aegean Sea** and the **Ionian Sea**. Two other seas in the region are the **Ligurian Sea** (bordered by the French and Italian Rivieras) and the **Balearic Sea** (between Spain and its Balearic Islands). Amid these seas are hundreds of islands of all sizes – Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and Cyprus are the four largest.

The Mediterranean has an average depth of just 4,900 feet. However, off the coast of Greece is an area that is 16,000 feet deep. Interestingly, the Mediterranean is notably saltier than the adjacent Atlantic Ocean. This is due mainly to the warm and relatively dry climate, which causes accelerated evaporation.

The Mediterranean Sea was created by the action of plate tectonics – specifically, the movement of the adjacent Eurasian and African plates. To this day, it is still a hotbed of geological activity and earthquakes are a constant potential threat. In addition, there are quite a few active or dormant volcanos, the greatest concentration of which are found in southern Italy and on the island of Sicily.

Man & the Mediterranean

The history of this region is, in many ways, the history of Western civilization. Successive powerful empires and states rose and fell here, shaping the destiny of the world as we know it. The four most important were Egypt, Greece, Phoenicia and Rome. The Roman

name for the Mediterranean was *Mare Nostrum,* meaning "our sea," and the entire region was under their rule for centuries. Indeed, historians refer to the Mediterranean as a "Roman lake," implying total control. Since the fall of the Roman Empire the region has been comprised of many different nations, some world (or at least regional) powers of considerable importance, while others have been mere pawns in the chess game of world diplomacy and conflict.

The 21st-century map is far more complicated with, as mentioned, about 20 different nations calling the region their own. And that figure doesn't even include countries bordering the Black Sea or Portugal, which, although outside the Mediterranean is definitely a part of its history and culture. Here's the line-up working in a clockwise direction from the Atlantic side (but you might want to follow along with a map to get a better feel for the geographic layout): The northern shoreline (Europe) has Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, Serbia & Montenegro, Albania and Greece. In Asia are Turkey (a small section is in Europe), Syria, Lebanon and Israel; the North African states are Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco. Independent island nations in the Mediterranean are tiny Malta and much larger Cyprus. Fortunately, most of the Mediterranean is more peaceful at this time than it has been since the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace) of ancient times, but one look at the Middle East and you quickly realize that the Mediterranean still has its danger zones.

The Mediterranean has been fought over by nations for thousands of years. There are more native ethnic groups in the region than there are nations. Ethnic and religious differences are only part of the story. Since ancient times, the sea has been a vital lifeline for trade and commerce, and whoever dominated the sea links through the Mediterranean was a world power to be reckoned with. Although the consequences of the ongoing battle were often tragic, it makes a visit to today's Mediterranean a living history lesson.

The Way to See the Mediterranean

Unless you have a year to roam about, it's impossible to fully explore the wonders of the Mediterranean nations on one trip. Wise travelers pick what interests them most and figure out the best way to see those sights. The Mediterranean Sea provides access to much of the region, so a cruise vacation is a wonderful way to explore, even if the cruise experience *per se* is not what you're looking for. Of course, you can enjoy the ship and its luxuries too.

I don't work for the cruise lines so, while their brochures present an idyllic look at the world of Mediterranean cruising, I'll present you with a more objective and balanced picture. There are advantages and disadvantages, and I will help you determine what kind of Mediterranean trip best meets your needs.

Advantages of Mediterranean Cruising

A cruise is essentially a complete package vacation, with an allowance for you to do your own thing at ports of call, as well as before and after the cruise. It's great if you don't like to plan all the details of a comprehensive vacation, especially one overseas, which generally requires more work than a US destination. As long as you sail with a cruise line catering primarily to Americans (or at least English-speaking travelers, which is what this book will focus on), then you needn't worry about language problems, foreign food that might not agree with you, or having to get around on your own in strange surroundings. Of course, you will encounter some of those issues while in port, but the potential pitfalls will be minimized. By opting for the cruise lines' pre-arranged shore excursions, your trip should be free of such uncomfortable situations. Then, of course, there are the joys of the cruise itself. Few land-based resorts can offer the variety of activities and facilities of a large cruise ship. And those that can would be far more costly, especially in Europe.

Cruise lines like to boast that they actually save you money over land vacations because you don't have separate additional costs for hotels, food and so on. This is true in many cases. If you like to stay at expensive hotels and dine in fine restaurants, then you might well consider a cruise to be an absolute bargain! On the other hand, those who watch their expenses might find cruising to be more expensive than what they're used to. Even so, with all the extras just about everyone, including the budget travel set, will usually admit that most cruises represent a good value. Be forewarned, however: cruise prices in Europe aren't as low on a per-night basis as they are in the Caribbean, the Mexican Riviera or even Alaska. Although there are a variety of cruise price categories (by line as well as by stateroom category on almost any ship), there aren't any real "budget" cruise operators catering to the American traveler.

Disadvantages of Mediterranean Cruising

I may not work for the cruise industry, but I love cruising so much that finding a disadvantage isn't easy. But there are some shortcomings to seeing the Mediterranean by ship. Cruising is slow (even though cruise ships have the advantage of usually traveling during the night), and a two-week cruise, for example, simply cannot cover as much ground as if you were always on the ground! This restriction will be acceptable for most people, especially if you want to see only a few places during your trip. However, if you like the whirlwind bus tour with a "if it's Tuesday it must be Belgium"-type experience, then cruising may not be for you.

Cruise ships generally stay at ports of call between six and 12 hours, although you will find a number of itineraries with overnight port stays. This limited time allotment in port is fine for small towns and other "specialized" ports of call, such as ancient historic sites or resort islands, but it can present a problem when visiting larger cities. A pet peeve of mine, for example, is the cruise that has Rome as a day port of call. How can anyone do justice to Rome in a single day? Again, how much of a problem this is depends upon your expectations. One solution to this potential disadvantage is to select a cruise that begins and/or ends in a large city – and this is the majority of Mediterranean cruises. You can then add days at either or both ends of your cruise to allow more time for in-depth sightseeing.

Cruise Lines & Their Ships

Types of Cruises

While the number of American-oriented cruise ships sailing the Mediterranean is less than you'll find in the Caribbean, the choice is still extensive and is growing each year. If you factor in European lines, the choice of lines and ships is just as great or even greater. This seemingly ever-increasing capacity is likely to mean heavy competition and good prices for the consumer for several years to come, although 2005 saw the cruise industry respond to increased demand with some price increases. For those who prefer the smaller and more traditional vessels, they can still be found on many Mediterranean itineraries.

While all cruises, obviously, have many things in common, if you have never cruised then you are probably in for a surprise at the variety of options that are available. This is certainly the case in the large Mediterranean market. While there are many ways to segment cruises into different categories, I find it useful to do so by looking at the following differentiating factors: destination, duration, type of ship and style of cruise.

Destination

The variety of destinations in the Mediterranean is so great that you can't lump all itineraries together. The typical Mediterranean cruise, if there is such a thing, will usually have either an *Eastern* or *Western* Mediterranean flavor. The western trips will have their ports of call in Spain, the French Riviera, the east coast of Italy and the larger Mediterranean islands. They might go as far as Venice. Eastern trips concentrate on the Greek Isles, Turkey, the Dalmatian coast (Croatia) and Venice. Either type might also visit some North African ports that are within their reach. Cruises that are specifically eastern or western Mediterranean itineraries often begin and end in the same port

Mediterranean
Major Ports of Call

1. Ajaccio (Corsica)
2. Alexandria
3. Alicante
4. Antalya
5. Athens
6. Barcelona
7. Bodrum
8. Cádiz
9. Cagliari (Sardinia)
10. Cannes
11. Casablanca
12. Catania
13. Corfu
14. Dubrovnik
15. Genoa
16. Gibraltar
17. Heraklion (Crete)
18. Hvar
19. Istanbul
20. Katákalon
21. Kusadasi
22. La Goulette
23. Lisbon
24. Livorno
25. Malaga
26. Marseille
27. Messina (Sicily)
28. Monte Carlo
29. Mykonos
30. Naples
31. Návplion
32. Nessebur
33. Nice
34. Odesa
35. Palermo (Sicily)
36. Palma de Mallorca
37. Portimao
38. Portoferraoi (Elba Island)
39. Portofino
40. Rhodes
41. Rome
42. St. Tropez
43. Salerno
44. Santorini
45. Sète
46. Sevastopol
47. Valencia
48. Valletta
49. Venice
50. Vigo

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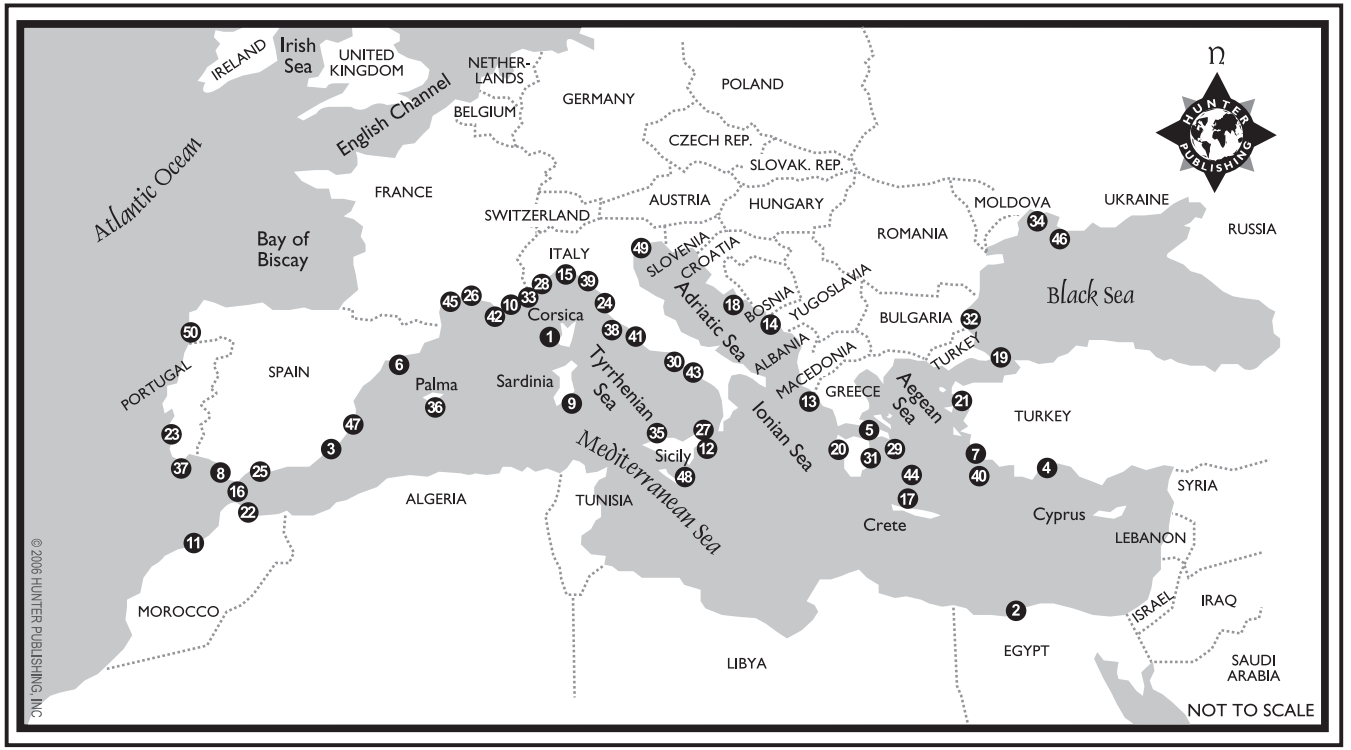


THE RIGHT CRUISE FOR YOU

although there are many one-way itineraries as well. Many cruises, especially longer ones, combine both eastern and western ports. These more frequently begin and end at different ports. Because they travel greater distances than east or west area cruises, these "grand" Mediterranean itineraries often have more days at sea per week than cruises covering a smaller area. Depending upon your outlook, this might be an advantage or disadvantage, or it may not matter to you at all.

In addition to cruises that confine themselves solely to the Mediterranean, you will find a large number of itineraries that begin or end elsewhere in western Europe and include both Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean ports of call. These are generally longer cruises. Both Mediterranean-only and western Europe itineraries rarely call on the Atlantic islands such as the Canaries and Azores. These, however, will often be included in trans-Atlantic itineraries – that is, you sail either to or from the Mediterranean from the east coast of the United States (mostly New York or Florida). These are great for people who like to spend long lazy days at sea, and they avoid the hassle of flying in one direction. Although there are some cruise ships that regularly sail across the Atlantic on such itineraries, most of the available itineraries are what are termed "repositioning" cruises. That is, they are only done at the beginning and end of the Mediterranean cruise season when ships are being redeployed either from or to another route (most often the Caribbean). Thus, in the late spring you will find trans-Atlantic itineraries going to Europe, and returning from Europe in October or early November. Because the cruise lines need to move the ships at these times, repositioning cruises often represent an especially good value on a per-night basis.

Duration

In the Caribbean, Alaska and the Mexican Riviera, the typical cruise lasts seven nights, although you can easily find longer and shorter itineraries. There are many Mediterranean itineraries of about a week, but the average cruise length here is somewhat longer, about 10 days. Even longer trips are certainly available. Cruises of less than a week in the Mediterranean are hard to come by if you are looking only at the major American-oriented lines. You'll generally have to go with a European operator or one of the luxury lines that often offer niche cruises of less than a week.

Type of Ship

Just as there are many variations in destinations, there is great variety in the types of ships serving the Mediterranean. It has become increasingly common for the major lines to deploy their most modern and largest ships in this market. These vessels offer the greatest array of facilities and amenities and have become the standard for cruising world-wide. Even the European lines, which until recently had smaller and more traditional cruise ships, have been upgrading their fleets with the new mega-ships. On the other hand, if the traditional vessel is more to your liking, you can certainly find that without too much difficulty in the Mediterranean. Smaller ships run the gamut from the most inexpensive cruise lines to the most expensive. The luxury yacht type of cruise ship is in abundance in the Mediterranean. And if you want to go on a sailing ship, that can also be found without difficulty.

Style of Cruise & Level of Luxury

These factors are dependent on one another to a degree, and are also influenced by the type of ship. Styles range from largely informal (usually more so on the less expensive lines) to a more formal experience. This can be stated in other terms – namely, is the cruise designed for a "party" experience or is it the type of cruise where onboard activities are geared more towards cultural enrichment? These days, most big cruise ships offer a measure of both. As already alluded to, cruise lines in the Mediterranean offer every imaginable level of luxury. It is, of course, related to how much you pay. The higher the cost, the more you'll be pampered. For most people, however, the level of luxury even on the lower priced mass-market lines will be more than they're used to and more than you would expect. Choice is increasingly important and, regardless of style or luxury level, this is a feature that more and more cruise lines are actively promoting.

Cruise Lines

More than 30 companies operate various types of Mediterranean cruises, the vast majority of which are traditional cruise lines that feature motorized cruise ships, but you can also cruise the Mediterranean on a real sailing ship.

YACHTING

A number of tour operators can book you onto a luxurious yacht, perhaps with several other passengers, or maybe just you. This type of travel is particularly common on trips confined to the Greek Aegean Islands or along Turkey's Turquoise Coast. Rentals are also an option if you know how to handle one of these babies. While some travel agents know how to connect with yacht tour operators, most will not. Two good places to start looking are the **International Yacht Charter Group**, ☎ (866) 492-4768, www.internationalyachtchartergroup.com or **A Yacht Charter**, www.a-yachtcharter.com.

Ship-by-Ship & Line-By-Line Evaluations

Before getting into specific ships and cruise lines, a few words on how this compilation is arranged. There are two basic categories: the mass market lines and the non-mass market lines. Within each of these two categories the lines will be broken down further by whether they are "American" or "European." What all of this means will be explained in each section.

Mass Market Lines

The first thing that must be emphasized is that the term "mass market" isn't meant to be derogatory in any sense. It simply means that these cruise lines appeal to the broadest section of the traveling public because they offer choice and luxury at an affordable price. They are also the lines with the most (and generally the biggest) ships in service on Mediterranean routes. A majority of readers who take a Mediterranean cruise (or a cruise anywhere in the world, for that matter) are likely to sail on one of the lines I place in this category. Another feature of the largest cruise lines is their innovative approach to creating an ever-increasing array of onboard activities and services. They provide a true resort experience in addition to taking you to exotic ports of call. Each of the major lines will be profiled in depth prior to a ship-by-ship description of their vessels. Only those ships serving the Mediterranean market will be fully described. Some things apply to all ships of a given cruise line. For example, cuisine and entertainment policy won't vary much at all from one ship to another on the same line. Thus, general information that is given

in the cruise line profile won't be repeated in the individual ship descriptions unless it significantly differs in some way.

Statistical information for the cruise lines and individual ships is mostly self-explanatory. However, a few items are worthy of clarification.

- The number of ships shown under the *Fleet* heading is the total number of vessels in service or scheduled to have been placed in service as of January, 2006. This includes all of the ships of that line and isn't limited to the number serving the Mediterranean.
- The figure for *Under Construction* includes projects currently in the shipyards and firm order commitments.
- *Year Built:* The year of the ship's maiden voyage. The year of the most recent major refurbishment, if applicable, will be indicated in brackets for any ship built prior to 2000.
- *Passengers:* Indicates the number of passengers the ship will carry based on double occupancy of all staterooms. You might well see other numbers given in various sources of information on a particular ship. Because of additional persons in any number of rooms, a ship that is fully booked will almost certainly be carrying far more people than the double occupancy figure. However, I use this basis because it is the most commonly accepted method in the cruise industry and various measurements of ships use this basis in their calculations.
- *Passenger/Crew Ratio:* The number of passengers divided by the number of crew members, expressed as a ratio, such as 2.4:1. In theory, the lower the number, the better the service. This is logical since you can assume that if there are three passengers to be taken care of by each crew member, that would not be as good if that same crew member only had to serve two passengers. While the luxury lines are the only ones where you'll frequently see ratios of less than 2:1, I have yet to find any reliable correlation to minor variances in the ratio. I have been on ships with a 2.7:1 ratio where the service was better than on a ship with a 2.2:1 ratio. Again, it is only a general indication of service.

- *Stateroom Size:* Rooms on ships are a lot smaller than what you will find in a hotel, or even in most inexpensive motels. This is important to keep in mind if you have never sailed before. The measurements are in square feet and the range shows the smallest to the largest accommodation, including suites. Room sizes for standard cabins (excludes suites and mini-suites) are most often in the range of 140 to 220 square feet. The majority of today's vessels are being built with minimum room sizes of 160 square feet or more. Experience tells me that if the room is smaller than 150 square feet, you're going to have a space problem.
- *Space Ratio:* A measure of how "roomy" the ship is. It is calculated by dividing the Gross Registered Tonnage by the number of passengers. The higher the number, the more space you have per passenger, at least in theory. Some cruise experts consider this figure almost as gospel. While I agree that this ratio does provide some indication of available space, there is no way to mathematically account for the "feel" the ship has. That is, the design of the ship (including traffic flow) is a more important indicator of how much space you have than a simple number. It should, like the Passenger/Crew Ratio, be used with a grain of salt. Extremely low space ratios, however, should be a warning to expect a crowded feeling.

One fact that I've deliberately omitted for each ship or line is the nationality of the crew (that is, non-officers). Although in the past it was the norm for each line to draw its crew from mainly one national or ethnic group, this is no longer the standard practice. It is not uncommon for crew members who directly serve passengers to encompass 40 or more different nationalities. In effect, every ship is a United Nations and that adds a lot of flavor to your experience. A few lines still emphasize one or two nationalities. Holland America crews, for instance, are dominated by Indonesian or Filipino men and women.

You will find useful definitions of some terms in the ship listings in the sidebar *A Nautical Primer* on page 75.

"American" Cruise Lines

Don't start writing the publisher that these cruise lines aren't really American because they all have ships registered outside the United States. Although that is true, the companies themselves are primarily American- or British-owned and, more importantly, cater their oper-

ations to mostly American guests. So I am using "American" in a larger sense than simply where a ship is registered and what nationality the crew is.

WHO'S WHO IN THE CRUISE BUSINESS

There are literally dozens of cruise lines throughout the world, many of which are completely unknown to the American traveler because they don't cater to this market. But even if you limit yourself to the North American cruise market, there are more than a dozen major lines. At least in name. Consolidation, so common in every industry, is also a trend in the cruising business. There are relatively few cruise companies if you consolidate brands by their corporate banner. Here's the lineup:

Carnival: Besides Carnival, this industry behemoth owns Costa, Cunard, Holland America, Princess, Seabourn and Windstar. They also have several other European brands besides Costa, including P&O and some smaller subsidiaries. In fact, if you count all subsidiaries of subsidiaries both large and small, the Carnival Group operates ships under 12 different brand names.

Royal Caribbean: The Royal Caribbean brand is, by itself, the second-largest cruise line after Carnival. That goes for the group as well because RC also owns Celebrity Cruises in addition to some smaller operators in Europe. It is the practice of Carnival and Royal Caribbean to let each line operate independently, thereby allowing for more variation in cruise style. Despite the consolidation there has yet to be any significant upward trend in prices as a result, although now that Carnival has acquired Princess (in 2003) there is some concern that this could happen. Recent price increases are being driven by demand, not lack of competition. On the positive side, the cruise lines will (with lots of restrictions) give you credit for traveling on a sister line. For instance, you can get past-guest treatment and prices on a Carnival Cruise if you sailed in Europe on Costa or Cunard.

As far as the rest of the industry is concerned, most of the remaining lines are independent. **Norwegian Cruise Line** is owned by a large Asian-based cruise company called Star Cruises. But NCL also largely operates according to its own style on a day-to-day basis.

⚓ CARNIVAL CRUISE LINES

☎ (800) 227-6482
Website: *www.carnival.com*
Officers: Bridge officers are Italian, but others on some ships may be international.
Ships' Registry: The Bahamas for most of the fleet, with a few ships registered in Panama.
Fleet: 21 ships; 1 under construction.

The world's largest cruise line has played a major role in providing affordable cruising to the public. While Princess' *Love Boats* caught the imagination of the public on television back in the 1960s, it was the newly established Carnival line that introduced more new ships and more ideas back then. Then and now they offer excellent value and a casual, mostly informal experience on their self-proclaimed "fun ships." The entire Carnival fleet features a striking all-white exterior, except for the mostly red-and-blue Carnival logo and their distinctive funnel, which is shaped more like the tail of a jet airplane than a ship's smokestack. This may not seem very important when you read it, but it's a feature that definitely adds a graceful flair to all of Carnival's ships. One of the most notable features of any Carnival ship is its large main showroom, which puts an emphasis on lavish Vegas-style entertainment. Glitz is in evidence in more than just the production shows. Interior décor places an emphasis on eye-popping features and tries to dazzle you with the "wow" factor. This is especially true in Carnival's famous large atriums and the public areas surrounding them. Those who prefer a more refined appearance may need sunglasses! Activities are geared much more toward fun than cultural enrichment. In fact, entertainment is so important at Carnival that towards the end of dinner in the main dining room your wait staff will put on a brief song and dance act that differs each night of the cruise. It's definitely a lot of fun and many passengers get involved by twirling their napkins in the air as the crew parades around the tables.

Speaking of dinner, Carnival vessels offer a wide variety of dining choices and their newest ships even have an elegant supper club. Although Carnival doesn't break much culinary ground, they always provide excellent meals that are colorfully presented by a friendly wait staff and that get high marks from most of the cruising public. You won't, however, get the white glove treatment. The buffets are excellent and feature many stations, including an excellent deli on their larger and newer vessels. Midnight buffets are big at Carnival, but their once-per-cruise Midnight Gala Buffet is an experience to remember. Concentrating on sweets, it's such a visual spectacle that guests are invited to view it an hour earlier just to take photos!

Carnival's handling of the Captain's cocktail reception is also something special as practically an entire deck becomes a walk-through feast of hors d'oeuvres and colorful exotic drinks. A 24-hour pizzeria and ice-cream bar are other popular features with ever-hungry cruise passengers. Children's activities and facilities are always extensive but the bigger the ship, the more they have. In general, Carnival provides a cruising experience that is equally good for couples and families with children. Carnival is one of the great innovators in the world of cruising. They were pioneers in the mega-ship category for contemporary cruising. They also offer a great deal of flexibility.

Until a few years ago Carnival didn't offer European cruises except for an occasional week or two when some of their new ships, which are built in Europe, took a spin before coming across the Atlantic to operate in the Caribbean or elsewhere. That began to change in 2005 when the line had a ship doing 12-day itineraries in the Mediterranean for most of the season. It was such a success that they decided to return that ship for the entire summer 2006 season. It is expected that this service will continue and might even be expanded. This is great news for Carnival lovers who have been waiting for the opportunity to take a Carnival cruise in previously unavailable destinations.

Carnival Liberty

Year Built: 2005	Gross Tonnage: 110,000
Length: 952 feet	Beam: 116 feet
Passengers: 2,974	Passenger Decks: 13
Crew Size: 1,150	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.6:1
Stateroom Size: 185-430 sq ft	Space Ratio: 37.0

The *Carnival Liberty* is the fourth ship in the line's mega-ship *Conquest* class, the largest in the fleet. The smooth, straight lines of the exterior are matched by a generally straight and easy-to-navigate deck plan. Any curves in the route are intentionally there to break up overly long views that could give you tunnel vision and to add visual style. Most of the public decks (other than the usual Lido and sports-related decks) are in the middle of the ship, sandwiched between accommodation decks above and below.

The ship features a spectacular nine-level atrium and has two balcony levels that give it a spacious look and more vantage points from which guests can be dazzled with the interior view. There are two main dining rooms, each with two levels. The one at stern is easier to get to than on many ships with this split design because you don't have to find a specific bank of elevators that goes there; you can reach it either on the inside of the ship on the balcony level or via an outside promenade on the main level. There is a wonderfully varied alternative program of dining, entertainment and recreational facilities, as is the case on all of Carnival's super-liners. There are four

swimming pools, one of which can be covered by a sliding glass dome, and one for children only. The latter is located in a large and well-equipped children's center perched high up on the Sun Deck. This so-called "children's world" covers more than 4,000 square feet and is the biggest and best of the fleet's already well-established children's facilities.

Accommodations are varied but feature a large number of outside rooms with private balconies. Size-wise, the *Conquest*-class vessels happily continue Carnival's policy of providing spacious staterooms in even the lowest-priced categories (with even the smallest room being somewhat larger than on most other Carnival ships). The furnishings and color schemes are also similar to other recent ships in the fleet; that is, attractive and comfortable without breaking any new ground.

⚓ CELEBRITY CRUISES

☎ (800) 437-3111
Website: *www.celebritycruises.com*
Officers: Greek.
Ships' Registry: Liberia, except for *Mercury*, which is registered in Panama.
Fleet: 9 ships.

Celebrity's ships, like most other cruise line fleets, have certain distinguishing exterior characteristics that make them easily recognizable. Their vessels feature a mostly white upper superstructure with large, broad bands of dark blue across the bottom section of the hull and additional blue trim on the superstructure. Their hallmark funnels are crossed with what most people would say is a slanted huge white letter "X." In reality, this is the letter *chi* in the Greek alphabet and can be traced to the old days when Celebrity was a Greek cruise lined called Chandris. The *chi* is for the "Ch" in Chandris. That little piece of history aside, the overall exterior effect may not be as beautiful as the more common all-white exteriors, but there is no denying that Celebrity vessels are both striking and sleek. Celebrity is perhaps best known for its outstanding level of service. It is consistently rated as one of the best cruise lines in the world by experienced travelers, including the most experienced cruisers. And the good news doesn't stop there because Celebrity, although higher-priced than Carnival or Princess, is affordable for anyone considering a cruise. Many experts, including myself, consider Celebrity to be a better buy than Holland America, which offers cruises of equal quality but at higher prices.

The level of service shouldn't come as a surprise when you consider that Celebrity ships have between 300 and 600 fewer passengers than similarly-sized ships on many other mass-market lines. The

cruise experience on Celebrity is refined. There are sommeliers to help you choose the right wine (and wine classes), cooking workshops, lectures on many topics of interest, as well as educational programs focusing on the regions you are visiting. Beautiful works of art from the masters to modern grace all Celebrity vessels. The décor can best be summed up as understated elegance rather than glitz. Staterooms feature a lot of wood surfaces. But Celebrity isn't stuffy at all and there are plenty of fun-filled events with the cruise staff and lots of informal activities to go along with the more culturally oriented events.

Excellent cuisine is another Celebrity hallmark, and the sophistication of the food preparation, presentation and service is higher than most of the mass-market lines. Dining flexibility hasn't been as great as on some other lines because many Celebrity ships aren't as big, although it varies quite a bit from one Celebrity ship to another. Their larger ships offer plenty of choices while the smaller ones do not. On the other hand, their alternative (additional cost) dining options are among the most sophisticated and impressive at sea. *Cova Café Milano* is a wonderful feature of all their vessels. Here you can select from a wide variety of specialty coffees while treating yourself to a delectable European pastry. Celebrity offers its "midnight bites" (snacks presented by roving waiters in public areas) in lieu of buffets on most nights, but they do have one or two gala buffets that rival anything at sea. All Celebrity ships have the usual array of amenities and facilities of a large cruise ship, but their *AquaSpa by Elemis* is a Celebrity feature that warrants special attention. Their spa facilities may well be the best-equipped on the sea and, in addition to the usual exercise equipment and beauty treatments, it has sauna, steam, aromatherapy and other goodies for those who appreciate the finer things in life. Gymnasium patrons can even avail themselves of the services of a certified personal trainer.

Celebrity does cater to adults, although they have incorporated additional facilities for children in order to extend the appeal of Celebrity beyond just couples. These facilities are sometimes divided into four age groups (during peak sailing periods), but most of the time all children are grouped together, regardless of age. Celebrity offers "adults only" (minimum age of 21) cruises to most of its destinations, sometimes including the Mediterranean.

- AUTHOR TIP: If you are interested in this type of experience you should contact Celebrity well in advance of your planned cruise since there are always very limited sailing dates for adults-only cruises.

The first-rate accommodations you'll find throughout the fleet feature tastefully appointed rooms that are generally larger than industry averages. Things like finer quality towels, robes and linens are standard. "Concierge Class" is an upgraded status where you get little extras. However, the added cost isn't justified in my opinion, since the room size is the same. Once you get into the suite category on Celebrity, the extra luxuries offered really start to pile up.

Constellation/Millennium

Year Built: 2002/2000	Gross Tonnage: 91,000
Length: 965 feet	Beam: 106 feet
Passengers: 1,950	Passenger Decks: 11
Crew Size: 1,000	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 1.9:1
Stateroom Size: 170-1,432 sq ft	Space Ratio: 46.7

Along with two other sister ships of the *Millennium*-class, these are the largest vessels in the Celebrity fleet and it shows that a mega-sized ship and top-notch quality are not conflicting concepts. While Celebrity has always been known for its fine and elegant facilities, it takes a ship of this size to offer the full range of activities today's traveler expects. The three-level Grand Foyer is gorgeous in an understated sort of way, but there's more drama in the outside glass elevators that ascend 10 decks above the sea. Despite the ship's large size, the main dining room is not so overwhelming as to be distracting and it is simply beautiful. *Constellation* and *Millenium* have a wide range of shopping options, bars and lounges plus fabulous recreational facilities. The Constellation Lounge at the bow near the top of the ship is a wonderful multi-purpose venue for entertainment and dancing, as well as being a focal point for lectures and a good place to just take in the view. When it comes to big shows, this class of ship provides more extravagance as the large stage in its beautiful three-level theater is Broadway quality. All staterooms include use of bathrobes of Egyptian cotton, mini-bar, safe and a host of other amenities in spacious and attractive surroundings. *Constellation* sails primarily in northern Europe but some of its transitional cruises call on Mediterranean ports.

Galaxy

Year Built: 1996	Gross Tonnage: 77,713
Length: 866 feet	Beam: 106 feet
Passengers: 1,870	Passenger Decks: 10
Crew Size: 909	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.1:1
Stateroom Size: 171-1,514 sq ft	Space Ratio: 41.6

There is no doubt that this is a large ship but, by today's standards, it's not super-sized. That is generally true of much of Celebrity's fleet and will be appreciated by those travelers who feel a bit over-

whelmed by some of today's big vessels (including, perhaps, the Celebrity ships described above).

The four-story Grand Foyer is the focal point of the public areas and a wide variety of facilities and lounges are easily accessed from it. The main theater is two levels, although most seating is on the main level. The balcony consists of small, almost private box-like seating areas similar to an old-style European opera house. Something else you can try while on board is the golf simulator. While relatively few modern vessels have outdoor viewing areas at the bow, the *Galaxy* does boast this feature, as well as a spacious enclosed observation area atop the ship on the Sunrise Deck. Excellent cuisine is served with panache in a beautiful two-tiered main dining room. Alternative dining options are somewhat limited as this ship came into service a little before the trend to offer many different dining experiences. Staterooms are a very nice size (the smallest being more roomy than is standard in the cruise industry) and are comfortably furnished in cheerful colors. Relatively few have balconies.

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL AT SEA

The famous Montreal-based entertainment company has shows all around the world, including four in Las Vegas alone. So, where does the successful avant-garde circus go next? To sea, of course. Cirque du Soleil is currently performing on two Celebrity ships, including the *Constellation*, which frequently is deployed in the Mediterranean. Since its inception in December of 2004, the show has proven popular and could well be expanded to all ships in the fleet and certainly at least to all of the *Millenium*-class vessels. For those who are familiar with Cirque's shows, don't expect your "typical" Cirque du Soleil show because this isn't a fixed and static performance. Taking place in the "Bar at the Edge of the Earth," a specially redecorated lounge on the ships' top deck, the special characters of Cirque (including some created just for Celebrity Cruises) interact nightly with passengers in a masquerade ball. Sound like fun? Then head up to the lounge when festivities take place between 11pm and 2am. For those who aren't such late-night owls, the costumed Cirque characters also roam the ship throughout the day creating all sorts of fun, including some for kids who aren't allowed to attend the nightclub-style festivities in the bar.

⚓ HOLLAND AMERICA LINE

☎ (800) 426-0327
Website: *www.hollandamerica.com*
Officers: Dutch.
Ships' Registry: The Netherlands. One ship is Bahama registered.
Fleet: 13 ships.

With almost 140 years of sailing experience, it's little wonder that traditions are very important at Holland America. Although they've adapted to the modern world of cruising, HAL is still, in many ways, an old-fashioned, traditional cruise line that appeals to a large segment of the sailing public. It starts with the basic exterior design and features such as their conservative midnight blue hull, as well as the color trim on the white superstructure. All of the public areas (including those ships with atriums) tend toward a classy styling that features generous use of wood and an understated elegance rather than a deliberate attempt to "wow" you. The result is a fine setting for a sophisticated cruise experience. Works of art, including paintings and sculpture, are a big part of HAL ships, and sometimes these vessels seem like floating art galleries. The art work is mainly themed to Dutch nautical traditions. There is always a wrap-around promenade deck; you can walk around the entire ship. This is another way that all Holland America vessels keep older cruising traditions alive. Not that the new world of cruising hasn't had an effect on HAL ship design and décor. Their new and fabulous *Vista*-class vessels have some of the splashiness and eye-catching glitz that is so popular elsewhere. However, even these ships do it mostly with Holland American style.

Holland America has a well-deserved reputation for fine food, outstanding personalized service and a host of onboard activities. Like Celebrity, it is always one of the most highly rated lines. They do a good job of combining fun and culturally enriching activities. Informative lectures and discussions on the ports of call are one of HAL's strong points in this regard, although educational topics run the gamut. HAL is one of the most active lines when it comes to "theme" cruises. The themes can be on just about anything but might, for example, concentrate on a particular type of music during the course of a cruise.

Accommodations are quite varied, especially when it comes to size. This depends largely on whether it's a newer ship as HAL's older vessels have a number of room categories where the square-footage is very low. Many amenities are a feature of HAL staterooms, but especially so when you enter the upgraded suite categories. These include things like personal concierge service and an invitation to the *Rijstaffel* (literal translation is "rice table"), a traditional and extrava-

gant Dutch-Indonesian buffet lunch hosted by the Captain. Unfortunately, HAL no longer offers the *Rijstaffel* as a feature for all guests.

A few final notes about Holland America. Tipping, which used to be included, is no longer a part of the basic cruise fare, so you'll have to add this as you would with just about every other line. Social hosts, that is dancing or dining partners for unescorted female guests, are available. This is something that used to be a common practice in the cruise industry. HAL is one of the few mainstream cruise lines that offer this feature (Celebrity also does it, although they don't push it as much). Just about all cruise lines include an option for privately escorted shore excursions in some ports, but HAL has taken this further than its competitors. It is something that they first introduced in Europe and you'll find it in almost every Mediterranean port of call. Be aware, however, that this is a costly way to spend your time in port.

THE VIEW FROM THE CROW'S NEST

One of the pleasures of cruising has always been to enjoy the view from a special interior spot where you could sit and gaze out upon the water or the passing scenery without getting blown away by the wind. Fortunately, Holland America has retained the "Crow's Nest" – their observation lounge. The name comes from an even older nautical tradition: a lookout high up on the ship's tallest mast. But on HAL you don't have to climb a rope or ladder to get there. Always on the top or next-to-the-top deck, an elevator will whisk you to a beautiful lounge that provides unobstructed views on three sides. The Crow's Nest also has a small dance floor, so there is often entertainment. It is a common venue for lectures and other shipboard events. If you sail on Holland America, be sure to spend some time at the top.

Amsterdam/*Rotterdam*

Year Built: 2000/1997	Gross Tonnage: 62,000
Length: 780 feet	Beam: 106 feet
Passengers: 1,316/1,380	Passenger Decks: 10
Crew Size: 644	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.0:1/2.1:1
Stateroom Size: 182-1,126 sq ft	Space Ratio: 47.1/44.9

With only minor statistical differences and essentially the same layout, these two ships are really sisters. The *Amsterdam* and *Rotterdam* are still considered the co-flagships of the fleet, despite the introduction of a series of newer and larger ships which you'll read about next. The reason for this is that both vessels hold a special place in the

company's traditions because they carry names that go way back in the history of the line. Both names have been used since HAL first went into business and a series of popular ships have carried on the name and the traditions associated with it. The ships have two funnels that are placed side-by-side almost at the stern of the ship. There is a lot of space at the bow before the steeply sloping superstructure begins to rise from the deck. Overall, these are graceful and mostly traditional vessels, although there are certainly some elements of more modern ship design visible on the exterior.

There is a most attractive three-level atrium that serves as the focal point of both ships. The layout of the two primary public decks is a bit confusing. However, you will get used to it after a short time at sea. Gold is a popular color and is most prominent in the gorgeous main dining rooms of each ship. These rooms have two levels, as does the theater. Alternative restaurants are available in addition to the almost ever-present "Lido" deck buffet. There are several swimming pools and one can be covered during inclement weather. Be sure to take note of the wonderful bear sculptures at the outdoor pool on *Amsterdam*. The staterooms are large, even oversized, in the lower price categories, and are nicely equipped. Most have good-sized windows but there are no floor-to-ceiling windows or balconies until you get into the suite category. All have full bathtubs, a feature on just about the entire HAL fleet and something you seldom see on higher-priced lines.

Noordam

Year Built: 2005	Gross Tonnage: 85,000
Length: 951 feet	Beam: 106 feet
Passengers: 1,848	Passenger Decks: 11
Crew Size: 842	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.2:1
Stateroom Size: 154-1,343 sq ft	Space Ratio: 46.0

The latest of Holland America's four magnificent new *Vista*-class vessels, the *Noordam* represents a dramatic departure from the typical HAL ship of the past. Not only is it significantly larger than most of the other ships of this line, but it has a dazzling, colorful and often extravagant style. In fact, the change was so great and shocked some of the line's more traditional passengers so much that they toned down the décor on the three ships built after the ground-breaking *Oosterdam*! I can understand their surprise, but I have to say that I liked the lively appearance and feel of that ship. The remaining *Vista* ships, including *Noordam*, still have a much greater splashiness and life than other HAL vessels and that is not bad. Moreover, despite the unusual degree of glitz, the décor doesn't detract from the fine service and overall classy experience that a Holland America cruise always offers.

Perhaps it is just as important to emphasize how this ship follows the traditions of HAL. That begins with the full wrap-around promenade deck, the three-level atrium and the Crow's Nest Lounge. The latter has an open observation area above it. The *Nordam* features extensive use of glass and curved, flowing lines to create a dramatic and airy atmosphere. This is most evident in the two-level main dining room and the magnificent tri-level main showroom called the Vista Lounge. There's also an alternative theater and more dining options than on other Holland America ships. The recreational facilities are larger and more extensive than on any other class of ship in the fleet. Among the options are a golf simulator, tennis and basketball courts. Spa facilities are among the largest and most sophisticated at sea. Despite the mostly adult orientation of Holland America, the little ones aren't neglected on *Vista* vessels. There are separate facilities for small children and teens, respectively called the Kid Zone and Wave Runner. While these will be welcome news for parents, one still cannot say that HAL represents the best choice for family-style sailing.

When it comes to accommodations, the *Noordam* raises the bar a few notches compared to this line's more traditional ships. This begins with the higher percentage of outside rooms that have private balconies. Spaciousness is generally also the order of the day, with most rooms being larger than cruise industry norms. However, be careful when booking inside rooms. HAL's brochure shows 185 square feet but this refers to *large* inside rooms. Those that are standard measure in at 154 square feet, which isn't bad, but is a far cry from 185. While the décor isn't that much different from other ships of the HAL fleet, there is a generally more cheerful color scheme that gives the rooms an airier look. The *Noordam* offers bathtubs in all but the lowest-priced stateroom categories.

Prinsendam

Year Built: 1988 [2002]	Gross Tonnage: 38,000
Length: 674 feet	Beam: 92 feet
Passengers: 794	Passenger Decks: 9
Crew Size: 460	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 1.7:1
Stateroom Size: 138-723 sq ft	Space Ratio: 47.9

The *Prinsendam* was originally named the *Seabourn Sun*. Seabourn is known as one of the premier luxury-yacht-type cruise lines and it was felt that the *Sun* was just too large to fit into their market niche. So it was transferred to HAL in the summer of 2002 and since then has been doing a large variety of cruises (usually longer than most) throughout the world, including the Mediterranean. The statistics alone show that this is HAL's most exclusive ship and you will pay additional for sailing on it. Whether it is worth the extra tab is a decision that you have to make based on your own preferences. While

there aren't crowds – and that will be a big plus to some people – the level of service and cruise experience doesn't differ all that much from what is offered on other ships in HAL's fleet.

You will find all of the traditional things associated with cruising on this ship, including rich teak decks and a wrap-around promenade. The ship is large enough to have most features found on the big ships, including a fine spa, golfing facilities and a variety of lounges. It also has typical HAL features such as a movie theater and, of course, the Crow's Nest Lounge. In addition to the main dining room and buffet option, there is a reservation-only alternative restaurant, which brings this ship right up to date in terms of the latest in onboard eating. The ship has a fairly easy layout with most areas in easy reach of the four-deck atrium.

In-room amenities are high on Holland America and particularly so on this ship, especially when you get into the higher-priced categories. In general, the rooms are excellent and furnished in a lovely manner. However, you do have to watch out for the size in the lowest categories. Most inside rooms are tiny, much too small for the price you're paying, and even some of the outside rooms that aren't categorized as "large" will likely be a major disappointment to many travelers.

⚓ NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE

☎ (800) 327-7030
Website: *www.ncl.com*
Officers: Norwegian
Ships' Registry: Bahamas, Panama or the United States.
Fleet: 12 ships; 3 under construction, but 2 or more existing ships will be replaced by new-builds.

With a name like Norwegian Cruise Line you would expect this company to have a significant presence in Europe. Well, in recent years, NCL hasn't been very European. In fact, they withdrew from the region entirely, except for occasional itineraries with new ships as they came out of European shipyards. There had been rumors that NCL would return to Europe to share in the growing importance of this cruising market and, shortly before we went to press, NCL announced that they would be offering Mediterranean cruises in 2006. At this point I can only assume that the line intends to remain in the European market.

NCL vessels feature an all-white exterior except for the dark blue trademark funnel that is placed far towards the stern. Their newest and biggest ships have introduced a flashy and unique design on the fore section of the hull – colorfully painted "ribbons" that lend a festive atmosphere. The response from the public has been positive and I'm sure this will become standard throughout their fleet. In general,

their ships have a nice combination of traditional and modern styling that is pleasing to the eye. Norwegian has a reputation for efficient and friendly service that is not particularly fancy or intruding. Likewise, their food hasn't earned special honors but it would take a very fussy gourmet to find anything significant to complain about. Norwegian is popular with young couples and families as much for their casual and fun approach to cruising as for their relatively low prices. My one complaint about NCL (and this applies to even their newest and best ships) is that many staterooms are smaller than on contemporary ships of their competitors. It is not uncommon for many classes of cabins to be less than 145 square feet. When booking, I advise you to upgrade enough to get a somewhat larger room, unless the size doesn't matter to you. When it comes to other facilities, Norwegian's vessels have everything that big ships can offer, including extensive children's programs, top-notch shows that vary from Broadway to Las Vegas-style, and full-service spas.

The degree of flexibility offered by NCL attracts many passengers. A trend that began in earnest perhaps five or six years ago and continues unabated today is to offer much greater freedom of choice when it comes to where and when you dine, how you dress, and other things. NCL has been a pioneer in this field with their *Freestyle* cruising. Although other lines have followed suit, NCL's *Freestyle* offers passengers the greatest degree of flexibility. Depending upon the ship, there can be up to 10 restaurants representing a wide variety of cuisines and styles. There is a fee for some of them. Dining times and seating arrangements are completely flexible (open seating from about 5:30pm to as late as 10pm). This applies even in the more traditional "main" dining room. Regardless of where you eat, you can dress as you wish (within reason – beachwear, for example, is taboo). Even in the most formal restaurant you can go casual. Of course, you can dress up as much as you want and many people still do. Formal nights are designated in various restaurants, but that just means it's dress-up time if you want it to be. The *Freestyle* concept is also marketed as applying to activities, but this is stretching it since all cruise lines allow you a big choice in this area.

The line has embarked on a program of renovating and building vessels mostly in the United States. As a result, they will soon have three ships that are U.S.-flagged, something that hasn't been seen for a long time. Because of legal and financial considerations, these ships will operate under the label of "NCL America," but there will be little difference noticed by guests except that the crews will be largely American. How the public reacts to this isn't known yet, but a lot of industry experts feel that part of the attraction of cruising is its international flavor. I concur. Therefore, there doesn't seem to be any rush by other lines to copy this strategy. American laws have also

changed the way NCL handles gratuities. In effect, there is a service charge added on and, for simplicity, this policy is being established fleet-wide, not just on ships that are designated as NCL America.

Norwegian Jewel

Year Built: 2005	Gross Tonnage: 91,740
Length: 965 feet	Beam: 105 feet
Passengers: 2,376	Passenger Decks: 11
Crew Size: 1,100	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.2:1
Stateroom Size: 142-5,350 sq ft	Space Ratio: 38.6

It is fitting that one of the newest and finest ships in the Norwegian fleet has been chosen to re-inaugurate NCL's European service. The ship didn't make its maiden voyage until August of 2005. The *Norwegian Jewel* is similar to its sister ships, *Norwegian Dawn* and *Norwegian Star*. It has been tweaked a little, mainly in the addition of a new classification of accommodations, described below.

This class of ship has been designed with *Freestyle* cruising in mind. As such, it boasts a wide variety of dining facilities. Among the 10 restaurants (modest additional fee for several) are a steakhouse, Le Bistro (French) and Tango's, a *tapas* bar (which is well suited to Mediterranean cruising). There is also an Asian restaurant and even a beer garden. Perhaps the most notable dining room is the fantastic Tsar's Palace, with a décor reminiscent of the great royal palaces of St. Petersburg. Both the food and the service are just fine as NCL has improved their staff ratios in recent years and so the level of service is considerably better than you would have found just a few years ago. Other public facilities are equally varied, including the no less than 13 bars and lounges. A unique concept is "Bar Central" – three interconnected bars with an elaborate decorative style. One is a martini bar, the second is a champagne bar, and the third is a wine bar. There are three swimming pools and six hot tubs. The three-level main theater is designed to accommodate the elaborate production shows for which NCL is known. There's a full-service spa and plenty of recreational opportunities, along with a children's program and lots of deck space for everyone.

Turning to the accommodations, *Norwegian Jewel* is generally above the level you'll find on most ships of this line. Even the smallest of the outside rooms are a nice size, with or without a balcony. The décor is colorful and attractive and the design is functional. My major complaint concerns inside accommodations which, at only 142 square feet, are quite small for today's biggest ships. At the other end of the scale, most suites are 300-800 square feet, but the two huge 5,350-square foot Garden Villas bring a new dimension in accommodations at sea – surprising, because NCL isn't usually the choice of travelers looking for that kind of luxury. The villas, which

are the biggest suites at sea, have five rooms plus a private garden with hot tub and come with a private butler and concierge service. The roughly $12,000 per-week tab isn't likely to appeal to most travelers but, if you have a few couples sharing, the per-person cost does come down quite a bit. On a more affordable note, the new class of stateroom on this ship is called a Courtyard Villa. Relatively few in number, they offer much greater space and luxury without quite getting into price levels that are only for the rich and famous.

⚓ PRINCESS CRUISES

☎ (800) 774-6237
Website: *www.princess.com*
Officers: British or Italian.
Ships' Registry: Britain or Bermuda.
Fleet: 15 ships; 1 under construction.

Princess of *Love Boat* fame can be said to have started the current popularity of cruising as a result of the television series that featured a Princess vessel. While the original *Love Boat* is no longer in service, the tradition continues with newer and better vessels. When the mega-ship *Grand Princess* was introduced in 1998 it began a revolution in cruise ship-building that opened up a whole new world to the cruising public. It was called "Grand Class," and it meant not only that you were on a ship with grand proportions, but that you had many options onboard that were heretofore unavailable to cruisers. The public response was so positive that Princess extended the concept of Grand Class in one form or another to the entire fleet. Ships that were too small too accommodate the changes were phased out. "Grand Class" as a style of cruising has been renamed by the Madison Avenue ad executives and now goes under the moniker of *Personal Choice* cruising, obviously meant to compete with Norwegian's *Freestyle*. One thing it encompasses is their so-called "anytime dining," which means you can choose between several specialty restaurants without fixed seating arrangements and traditional fixed dining in one of the main dining rooms. These "anytime" dining spots do not involve an extra fee but reservations are suggested if you want to avoid long waits. The buffet becomes a late-night bistro so you can have a light or even a full meal at two in the morning if you so desire. This feature has replaced the traditional midnight buffet on Princess vessels. The newer and bigger the ship the more *Personal Choice* there is.

The modern and rapidly growing Princess fleet features all-white exteriors with generally graceful lines and gentle curves. The cuisine on Princess is excellent, falling somewhere between Carnival and Celebrity in sophistication. The same is true of the service throughout the ship. Entertainment is among the most lavish and spectacular at

sea and ranges from Broadway to Vegas. There are numerous lounges in addition to the showroom where all types of entertainment takes place, even karaoke. Princess' vessels have become increasingly popular with families as activities and programs for children are extensive. They are grouped by ages (three or four groups, depending upon the ship). Other features found on Princess are the extensive facilities of the Asian-style *Lotus Spa*; varied recreational opportunities including a putting green and golf simulators; and extensive personal enrichment programs. The latter is known as the *Scholarship@Sea* program and it is safe to say that Princess has developed this more than any other cruise line (with the possible exception of Holland America). Also on the cultural side is the art gallery that is part of every ship in the fleet. This is in addition to works of art that are displayed throughout the ship. A dedicated concierge staff is available to all guests and provides a convenient way of making reservations for dining and other *Personal Choice* services. Stateroom facilities on Princess are uniformly excellent, with very few cabins that I would consider sub-par and these are limited to the very lowest categories on some of their older vessels. When it comes to accommodations, Princess boasts balconies, balconies, and more balconies. They were among the first to promote this as a feature and their ships are designed to have a majority of rooms with balconies. This is all very nice, no doubt, but do keep in mind that such rooms do cost more. Don't fall into the trap of cruise line advertising (certainly not limited to Princess) – you can have just as wonderful a trip without a balcony!

Golden Princess/*Grand Princess*

Year Built: 2001/1998	Gross Tonnage: 109,000
Length: 951 feet	Beam: 118 feet
Passengers: 2,600	Passenger Decks: 13
Crew Size: 1,100	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.4:1
Stateroom Size: 161-764 sq ft	Space Ratio: 41.9

It's hard to believe that eight years have passed since Princess introduced a new world of cruising with *Grand Princess* and its *Grand*-class amenities. It has proven to be a successful formula, not only with these two ships and a third sister, but with a whole range of ships that are similar in style and size. These, whether they are called *Gem*-class or something else, might have been tweaked somewhat and made a bit larger, but they all incorporate features that the original *Grand Princess* has. They are ideally suited to Princess' *Personal Choice* cruising program. While these two fair Princesses are no longer the largest ships cruising today, there is no doubt that they are huge. Fortunately, their massive size is softened to a great degree by several unusual exterior design features, a few of which are dramatically different from other contemporary mega-ships. For starters, the

stern slopes outward as it goes up, the opposite of more traditional vessels. The huge funnel is mostly hidden by a pyramid-like structure that displays the Princess logo on a maze of steel tubing. That may not sound so great in print, but wait until you see it before you judge. The most distinctive feature is the top of the stern, which houses a nightclub 15 decks above the sea that is connected to the rest of the ship via a bridge walkway. The club's position and shape looks like the handlebar of some gargantuan shopping cart! While this isn't my favorite part of the exterior design from an aesthetic point of view, the overall picture is stunning and impressive.

As for the interior, these Princesses are definitely magnificent. They don't have top-to-bottom atriums, but the three-story Grand Plaza is beautiful and dignified. The layout is quite simple for the most part. It may look confusing on the deck plans, but that is mainly because of the winding corridors that are designed to give a smaller feeling. Everything is easily reached except one of the main dining rooms, located at the stern. Accommodation deck corridors are straight as an arrow and have few nooks and crannies, so finding your room should be a breeze.

There are three main dining rooms (one traditional and two "anytime" as described in the general section on Princess Cruises), which helps to avoid the feeling that you're eating with 2,700 other people. Among the alternative dining facilities that cost an additional fee are an Italian trattoria and a steakhouse. The indoor/outdoor Horizon Court buffet also serves as an alternative eatery in the evening. When it comes to entertainment, the choices are as varied. Three separate lounge/showrooms provide a variety of shows. Two of them have stages that are large enough to do something meaningful. The main theater is a lovely two-tiered facility. This is in addition to the Skywalkers Nightclub. Even if you're not the nightclub type, you simply must see and experience the view in getting there!

Few ships can compete with *Grand Princess* and *Golden Princess* when it comes to recreational facilities. There are four pools, one of which can be covered. The latter is in an especially attractive setting. The combined gymnasium/fitness center/spa is huge and fully equipped. There are actually three decks devoted to recreation and, besides the specific facilities, there is plenty of room for walking, jogging or just lying around and soaking up the sun. The Promenade Deck is almost wrap-around. At the bow end of the ship, it continues one deck up. However, there is only a staircase connecting them, so wheelchair-bound travelers will not be able to circumnavigate the entire ship on the outside. Children's facilities are very good and include a virtual reality center (where adults will be seen regularly as well).

The accommodations are varied but all are nicely designed and furnished. The smallest rooms are sufficiently large by cruise ship standards, and going a few categories up will get you into even roomier quarters. The great majority of outside staterooms have their own private balconies. All rooms have only showers until you get into the mini-suite category.

Sea Princess

Year Built: 1995	Gross Tonnage: 77,000
Length: 856 feet	Beam: 106 feet
Passengers: 1,950	Passenger Decks: 10
Crew Size: 900	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.2:1
Stateroom Size: 159-611 sq ft	Space Ratio: 39.5

The *Sea Princess* seems to appear and disappear from the Princess fleet. It has spent some time under the P&O banner, but now seems to be back to its original home for some time to come. Similar in exterior appearance to the *Grand*-class ships except for the absence of the nightclub high atop the stern, it is easy to see how this ship and two of its sisters (that aren't sailing in Europe) were the prototypes for the even bigger ships that followed.

The public spaces are beautiful and the highlight is the fabulous four-level atrium and its panoramic elevators. A circular grand staircase connects the spacious casino with the shopping area on the deck below. Somewhat unusual is the location of the buffet – although it is high up, as is the case on just about every ship, it is positioned at the bow, giving diners a fabulous 180-degree panorama as they select and consume their much-too-big meals! There is an unusually large amount of open space on the upper decks for a ship of this size, so you should never feel crowded when everyone heads for the pool. As this ship was built just before the spa-craze really took off, facilities here are smaller than on some other ships but they are more than adequate. Main dining options include one traditional room and one for *Anytime* dining. There's also a specialty steakhouse and plenty of fast-food options.

Sea Princess has, relative to its size, fewer inside rooms than most other vessels, so if you want to save money by booking inside, do it early. All rooms feature typical Princess-style décor and amenities, which means they are quite nice. On the other hand, lower-priced categories are a tad smaller than is the general rule on still newer ships in this fleet. There are a few that just barely exceed the minimum that I find acceptable (150 square feet). However, you don't have to upgrade very much to get larger accommodations.

⚓ ROYAL CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL

☎ (800) 327-6700
Website: *www.royalcaribbean.com*
Officers: Primarily Scandinavian or Italian with some international for non-bridge positions.
Ships' Registry: The Bahamas or Norway.
Fleet: 20 ships; 2 under construction.

This is the second-biggest cruise lines in terms of the number of ships, trailing Carnival by a small margin. That gives you an idea of how successful they are and what a good product they deliver at affordable prices. Royal Caribbean has several ships serving the Mediterranean, although the selection is not as great as one might expect considering what Royal Caribbean has in its inventory. The *Radiance*-class ships (the first two ships listed below) are just dandy and are among the stars of the cruising world. However, 2006 will see the debut of the first *Voyager*-class ship ever to regularly sail in the Mediterranean.

The almost all-white exteriors of Royal Caribbean's vessels are an appealing part of this line's impressive fleet. The easily recognizable Royal Caribbean funnel with its dark blue crowned anchor symbol is generally placed fairly far back on the vessel. All of their newer ships (those built since around 1995) are definitely in the mega-liner category. Royal Caribbean has been an innovator in ship design and it is reflected in their exceptional size and varied facilities as well as in the brilliance of their architecture. Among their innovations were new recreational ideas such as a rock climbing wall. This feature first appeared on their giant new ships. It proved so popular that it has been extended to almost the entire fleet. This line also realized that a ship's eye-appeal is part of the cruise experience. They were among the first to incorporate an atrium into their ship designs. They call it the Centrum and it is always something spectacular. Royal Caribbean ships also feature the Viking Crown lounge high atop the vessel. Similar to Holland America's Crow's Nest, this is a great place to socialize while enjoying the passing view.

Royal Caribbean offers excellent food and friendly service. They are on the same level as Carnival in terms of formality and quality. While the majority of Royal Caribbean ships feature numerous alternative dining options, many do impose an additional fee. The entertainment and onboard activities are extremely varied and emphasize a fun time over culturally oriented programs. This line also can boast one of the most extensive children's programs at sea. Called *Adventure Ocean*, it features five different age groups. For parents who want a romantic evening by themselves now and then, the children's activities include dining separately with their friends at least one evening per cruise. They also have a kids' menu in the main dining room

that should delight the kids and make parents a whole lot more comfortable.

Brilliance of the Seas/*Jewel of the Seas*

Year Built: 2002/2004	Gross Tonnage: 90,000
Length: 962 feet	Beam: 106 feet
Passengers: 2,501	Passenger Decks: 12
Crew Size: 859	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.9:1
Stateroom Size: 166-584 sq ft	Space Ratio: 36.0

The *Radiance*-class vessels are second in size in the Royal Caribbean fleet to the *Voyager*-class (which aren't used on any Mediterranean itinerary). Second-biggest, yes; but definitely not second-class because these gorgeous ships come with a host of wonderful features and facilities. The ships are identical except for the names of some public areas. Extensive use of glass and open spaces give them a spacious feel. In addition to the usual recreational facilities, you'll find a golf-simulator, separate swimming pool for teens (thank you!), and a rock-climbing wall. The fitness center and spa facilities are first rate. The Viking Crown Club, a Royal Caribbean feature, goes well beyond what this facility usually offers in terms of both size and eye-appeal. There's a spectacular central atrium with glass-enclosed elevators running almost the entire vertical span of the ship. Called the Centrum, this visually stunning area provides convenient access to most public facilities. There are a good variety of entertainment venues, including a first-rate three-level main theater. The two-tiered main dining room has a gorgeous grand staircase, exquisite color scheme and graceful tall columns to go with a huge central chandelier. There are also alternative dining options in addition to the buffet. There aren't any bad accommodations on *Radiance*-class vessels, and even the lowest-priced cabins are large enough so you won't have to consider upgrading for more space. All rooms are nicely decorated in a cheerful manner with light colors and the design is also highly functional.

Jewel of the Seas is primarily limited to sailing in northern Europe, but it does touch on some Mediterranean ports in its transitional cruises.

Legend of the Seas

Year Built: 1995 [refurb 1997]	Gross Tonnage: 70,000
Length: 867 feet	Beam: 105 feet
Passengers: 2,076	Passenger Decks: 10
Crew Size: 720	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.9:1
Stateroom Size: 138-1,148 sq ft	Space Ratio: 33.7

A big ship but not huge by Royal Caribbean standards, *Legend* was one of the first vessels to introduce many features that are now considered standard. These include the miniature golf course called Leg-

end of the Links, the canopy-covered solarium and pool area, and an extensive children's activity area. They even have a video arcade – and you know how those electronic baby-sitters can come in handy. *Legend's* Centrum atrium is attractive, but isn't as large (and, therefore, is less impressive) than on many other ships of the fleet.

The two-level main dining room is very appealing and the food and service are both just fine. Where *Legend* does lack something is in its limited alternative dining options. There's the buffet, of course, (which isn't one of Royal Caribbean's better buffets) but little else. One thing you certainly won't have any trouble finding is a cocktail, as there is an abundance of attractive bars. The That's Entertainment Theater is only on one deck so the sight-lines aren't as good as on most newer ships, but the shows themselves certainly live up to the name of the venue. The Anchors Aweigh Lounge is the primary informal entertainment venue and it's a good facility where something is always happening. The ship has plenty of recreational facilities and lots of open space on the upper decks. There's a forward observatory area in addition to the standard Viking Crown Lounge.

The layout is simple and the ship doesn't feel crowded despite the relatively large number of passengers for its size. This includes decks devoted all or mostly to accommodations. *Legend* avoids having a seemingly endless maze of corridors with inside rooms tucked into every nook and cranny, a somewhat unpleasant reality on some of this line's ships built before the new millennium. Stateroom sizes are generally adequate, although beneath the junior suite level you won't find anything especially noteworthy. Only the lowest two classes of accommodation are likely to have you wishing that you had more room. The arrangement of the rooms is highly functional and the décor is pleasant. A large number of outside staterooms have private balconies, another feature of this ship that paved the way for what was to come after in the world of cruise-ship design.

Splendour of the Seas

Year Built: 1996	Gross Tonnage: 70,000
Length: 867 feet	Beam: 105 feet
Passengers: 2,076	Passenger Decks: 10
Crew Size: 723	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.9:1
Stateroom Size: 137-1,148 sq ft	Space Ratio: 33.4

Not that 10 years is a ripe old age for a ship, but things have changed so much in the world of cruising that you often have to wonder if a ship this age has all the things today's cruise public demands. Not to worry here, because *Splendour of the Seas* was in many ways one of the first of the new breed of ships. It introduced features that are now taken for granted on the mega-ships, such as the miniature golf course (here, amusingly called Splendour of the Greens), the canopy-

covered solarium pool area, and an extensive children's activity area along with a video arcade. The familiar Royal Caribbean Centrum (atrium) and its shops and other facilities is also a fixture here, although on a smaller scale.

The two-level dining room is appealing, but the main showroom is less so. Like other vessels of similar size and age, there are only limited dining venues. There is an abundance of attractive bars and lounges. The ship has plenty of recreational facilities and lots of open deck space on the upper decks.

The layout is simple and the ship doesn't feel particularly crowded despite the relatively poor space ratio. Likewise, *Splendour* certainly doesn't boast one of the better passenger-to-crew ratios, but the service level doesn't seem to suffer compared to other ships of this line or other lines with a similar pricing structure. Stateroom sizes are generally adequate with only the lowest class or two likely to have you wishing you had more room. The arrangement of the rooms is highly functional and the décor is pleasant. A large number of outside staterooms have private balconies.

Voyager of the Seas

Year Built: 1999	Gross Tonnage: 138,000
Length: 1,020 feet	Beam: 157 feet
Passengers: 3,114	Passenger Decks: 14
Crew Size: 1,185	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.6:1
Stateroom Size: 160-485 sq ft	Space Ratio: 44.3

This was the first in a class that now numbers five ships. It is the largest vessel of any mass-market cruise line, although it is somewhat smaller than the *Queen Mary 2* (see the sidebar below for more on the ship size game). Even so, you might well have done a double-take when reviewing the statistics. But those admittedly awesome numbers, along with all kinds of superlatives about its beauty, doesn't do full justice to this floating resort. Despite the size, which can only be termed behomoth, this is an extremely beautiful and even graceful vessel. The gently sloping decks and rounded stern, along with the profiles of the top-side Adventure Dome and funnel, give it a decidedly regal look. Five decks of accommodations are located between the main indoor public areas and the three highest decks. (A small number of rooms are also on the two lowest public decks.)

With three full decks of recreational facilities you can expect to find all the usual activities and some very unusual ones. In addition to a rock-climbing wall (debuted on this ship and now almost a standard on Royal Caribbean vessels), you'll find mini-golf and an ice skating rink! Yes, not only can you take to the ice yourself, but the rink is surrounded by an arena and at least twice during the cruise is the venue for a fabulous ice skating show that you should not miss. The ship is

so big that it has, not one, but two Centrums. The main showroom is a beautiful three-deck affair, as is the exquisite main dining room with its graceful grand staircase. Tall columns support a dazzling ceiling and, because of the height, there is a great feeling of space. The two balconies gracefully surround the main floor and there's a piano on the middle balcony.

There are many alternative dining options, including the always-open Promenade Café and Johnny Rocker's, a 1950s-style burger place. It is next to the Adventure Ocean children's facility, one of the biggest children's programs at sea. The huge two-level spa and fitness center and the Viking Crown Lounge won't disappoint either, as both befit a ship of this magnitude.

But I've saved the best feature for last – the Royal Promenade. Three decks high and running over half the length of the ship, the Promenade (and not the Centrum) is the real heart of the ship. It serves as the primary internal corridor as well as its shopping center. None of today's ships has a wider variety of places to browse or shop. And because of the simple nature of the Promenade, it makes getting around easy despite what could be a bewildering size for some people. The Promenade is the scene of a "street" parade where dozens of crew members will entertain guests in a colorful *Mardi Gras*-style show. Other entertainment is also offered frequently on the Promenade. The Royal Promenade creates a new class of stateroom – namely the interior stateroom with windows! Yes, a good number of interior rooms have windows that overlook the Royal Promenade, so you can people-watch from the privacy of your cabin, not to mention just gawking at the fabulously colorful view.

Accommodations are quite varied. All of the rooms are of an adequate size and even the smallest won't leave you feeling cramped. Oceanview staterooms without balconies feature oversized round windows while the number of rooms with balconies is extensive. Interior stateroom design is nice, but nothing special.

It is worth mentioning that, despite the fact that the ship could well be carrying close to 4,000 passengers, it doesn't have a crowded feel. This is a ship where the relatively high space ratio is reflective of the true onboard feel. *Voyager of the Seas* is, indeed, an experience in itself.

NOW THAT'S A BIG SHIP!

When Cunard's *Queen Mary II* made its maiden voyage in early 2004 it created a stir in the cruise world. Certainly, a part of this was due to the fact that it was the world's largest cruise ship in terms of length (1,132 feet), height (236. 2 feet) and some other measures. Yet, it isn't that much bigger than Royal Caribbean's *Voyager*-class vessels, which were introduced back in 1999. In fact, they each hold more passengers than the *Queen Mary II* and are also bigger in some other measurements. Of course, the *Queen's* publicity is good for the cruise industry so I don't mind it getting all that attention, but I can only conclude that America's love affair with things "royal" is what made the difference in media attention.

You've just read about *Voyager's* features, but now for some even bigger news. Apparently perturbed by the fact that the *QM2* is considered bigger, Royal Caribbean is now building a series of three so-called *ultra-Voyager*-class vessels that will clearly be the biggest. The first of this trio will be called *Freedom of the Seas* and will debut in June of 2006. Approximately 15% larger than the *Voyager*-class ships, these babes will weigh 158,000 GRT and hold 3,600 passengers double-occupancy. In addition to the features of the existing *Voyager*-class ships, all of the *ultra-Voyagers* will boast a family water park and cantilevered whirlpools partially suspended over the sides of the ship. There will be a 1,400-person crew to take care of the needs of passengers on the 15 public decks. But these ships won't be champs for that long. Costa Cruises has announced that they are working on the design of a ship that will weigh 200,000 GRT. Now that's a *big* ship!

"European" Cruise Lines

The mass-market European cruise lines aren't that different from American operators in terms of the type of ships and onboard experience featured. In the past, European lines had mostly older and smaller vessels that wouldn't have as much appeal to the American cruise market because Americans look for more features and more luxurious surroundings. Well, it seems that Europeans have been copying their American counterparts in this regard. The past several years has seen a huge upgrading of their ships to levels that are on a par with the American lines. There are some important differences, however, that you must bear in mind before selecting one of these

lines. The major difference is that the cruises are geared towards European passengers. Therefore, the primary language onboard won't be English (except in the case of P&O). As Costa and MSC Cruises are both Italian companies, Italian is the language used and the euro is the onboard currency. In addition, smaller differences include things like the voltage in room electric outlets. Smoking policies on Italian lines are far more stringent than in the past but you will definitely find more smoking than on American vessels. Depending upon your personal preferences these things may be either a major disadvantage or of slight importance to you. On the plus side, besides the interesting experience of sailing with people of other nationalities, these lines often have itineraries with ports that the American lines don't visit. More will be said about this in the section on evaluating itineraries.

⚓ COSTA CRUISES

☎ (800) 462-6782
Website: *www.costacruises.com*
Officers: Italian.
Ships' Registry: Italy.
Fleet: 11 ships; 1 under construction.

Costa is one of the largest and oldest of the European cruise lines. With Costa, "cruising Italian style" is more than a simple advertising slogan. It is one of the key factors that makes the line so popular with non-Italians! Many experienced American cruisers are familiar with this line because Costa has for many years been sending a couple of their ships to the Caribbean during the winter months. While this will give those readers an understanding of what Costa cruises are like, keep in mind that in the Caribbean they use English as the primary language and the dollar as the onboard currency. They also make other changes to cater to Americans. This is not the case when they're sailing in their home waters, when it's a full-blown Italian experience – announcements are in Italian and, as indicated before, smoking is more pervasive than on American ships.

Costa's fleet has been changing radically during the past several years... and much for the better I am glad to report. They still have a number of smaller and older ships. Not that these qualities automatically make a ship inferior. Indeed, there are travelers who prefer that type of vessel. However, Costa's few remaining older ships (and these will be clearly indicated in the ship descriptions) are a far cry from today's luxury cruise vessels. They are showing their age (despite renovations) and lack the diverse facilities and choices that cruisers expect. On the other hand, their newer mega-ships are simply fabulous. Not only do they have all of the facilities of the mainstream American lines, but they are definitely eye-catching. The décor is beautiful. While on a few ships it has a classic style, Costa

more often goes for a wilder, glitzy look à la Carnival (indeed, two classes of their ships have the same basic plan as Carnival's *Spirit* and *Conquest* classes). Exteriors of all Costa vessels are all white except for their trademark straight-upright yellow funnels with the big blue "C" emblazoned on them.

The cruise experience is geared towards an informal fun style. The Bacchanal is their most famous event and is probably the craziest thing in the world of cruising. Passengers don bedsheets as togas (instructions are provided) and take part in an evening of feasting – ancient Roman style! Shipboard activities are often similarly wild and wacky. Don't expect culturally refined activities to be much in evidence. This kind of atmosphere is popular with many people, but is detested by others. So know what you like. If you want Celebrity-style cruising don't go on a Costa cruise and come home saying you didn't like it. You've been warned. On the other hand, if you're a fun person seeking a good time, Costa may well be for you. The one big criticism that often is heard about Costa is that their food isn't all that good. Well, it is good – just not great. Most other lines do a better job in this regard, but Costa has made some improvements here too. Cuisine quality also seems to vary more from ship to ship than it does on most lines. The newer and bigger ships are generally the ones where the food seems to have improved the most. In any case, they do have excellent pasta, pizza and midnight buffets.

Costa Allegra

Year Built: 1992 [2001]	Gross Tonnage: 28,500
Length: 616 feet	Beam: 84 feet
Passengers: 820	Passenger Decks: 8
Crew Size: 450	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 1.8:1
Stateroom Size: 105-266 sq ft	Space Ratio: 34.8

Despite recent refurbishments and the fact that this ship isn't that old to begin with, there is no hiding that this ship looks something like a converted freighter. Its three closely-spaced funnels look too large for the size of the ship. In fact, few traditional cruisers will find the exterior of the *Allegra* pleasing to the eye. Although Costa hasn't said so, I have a strong feeling that this ship, as well as a couple of their other much older vessels, will soon be bidding farewell to the Costa fleet as the line continues to bring new ships into service. What is surprising is that this ship has a full range of facilities, although on a much more limited basis. For instance, there is a spa and disco. The one-level theater has an unusual arrangement in that it faces towards the back of the ship and you enter by the stage, unless you're coming from the steps at the rear that lead from the deck above. There are no alternative dining facilities besides the buffet. Although it has an excellent passenger-to-crew ratio (which is not unusual for smaller ships), the ship is by no means roomy. When it

comes to accommodations, things aren't so good. There are a large percentage of rooms that are far too small to be comfortable. (Note that on this ship and several other older European-line ships there are some rooms designated as "singles," designed for one person. Although these are the smallest rooms in square footage, my complaints about size are always reserved for what are supposedly double rooms.)

Costa Atlantica/*Costa Mediterranea*

Year Built: 2000/2003	Gross Tonnage: 86,000
Length: 960 feet	Beam: 106 feet
Passengers: 2,114	Passenger Decks: 12
Crew Size: 920	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.3:1
Stateroom Size: 160-388 sq ft	Space Ratio: 40.7

The Italian theme and décor on these ships are done up in fabulous, eye-popping style. I consider them to be absolutely gorgeous, although some people might think it is just a bit too much. Maybe my views are slanted somewhat because I live in Las Vegas and seem to have developed a preference for glitz! Of the many beautiful public areas, the *pièce de résistence* on each ship is the upper portion of a fountain-flanked grand stairway that is home to a wonderful lounge (the Caffé Florian, a replica of the one in St. Marks Square, on the *Atlantica*; and the Roero Bar on the *Mediterranea*). Both are visually magnificent and have a level of sophistication that is the antithesis of the light-hearted and festive atmosphere elsewhere on these ships. There are numerous works of art throughout and you can ask for a self-guiding tour brochure that describes each one. Although the ships don't have a full exterior wrap-around promenade, the promenades do continue in a manner of speaking. The bow wraps around on the inside in either the Garden Terrace or Winter Terrace, depending upon the ship. These beautifully decorated areas are never crowded (it seems a lot of people don't even know they exist) and make a great place to sit, relax and unwind. The three-tiered main theaters are magnificent (and the shows are great, too) but of more interest is the large and wonderfully festive lounge that is positioned immediately beneath the theater. The main other striking feature is the nine-level atrium with its huge painting on one wall. A glass stairway connects the top two levels for those who don't get dizzy from the heights.

The main dining room is a beautiful two-level affair where the only complaint for some might be the relatively high noise level. This is also the location of the gala *buffet magnifico*, a Costa classic event. Besides the buffet and plenty of places for snacking, each ship has a gorgeous alternative restaurant perched atop the edge of the atrium. Fabulous décor in Club Atlantica and Club Medusa, respectively on each ship, includes plenty of classic statues. These are addi-

tional-fee restaurants but the food is above par for Costa and is worth the price for those seeking a special occasion. There are excellent spa facilities and spacious pools and outdoor lounging areas. Children's facilities and programs are good but nothing special, although there's little doubt that the little ones will adore the waterslide.

The quality of the accommodations on these ships is fine. Even the lowest category of inside cabin is a nice size and the layout and facilities are highly efficient and functional. Outside categories are dominated by a large number of rooms with balconies but there are relatively few suites. How egalitarian!

Costa Classica	***Costa Romantica***
Year Built: 1992 [2001]	Year Built: 1993 [2003]
Gross Tonnage: 53,000	Gross Tonnage: 53,000
Length: 722 feet	Length: 722 feet
Beam: 102 feet	Beam: 102 feet
Passengers: 1,308	Passengers: 1,356
Passenger Decks: 9	Passenger Decks: 10
Crew Size: 650	Crew Size: 610
Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.0:1	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.2:1
Stateroom Size: 185-431 sq ft	Stateroom Size: 185-431 sq ft
Space Ratio: 40.5	Space Ratio: 39.1

These are nearly identical ships when it comes to layout and facilities. The major difference is on Deck 11 where the *Romantica* has 24 large suites that the *Classica* doesn't, accounting for the slightly larger passenger capacity on the latter. To make up for this, the arrangement of the spa on *Romantica* is different (and somewhat smaller) but most of the space lost to rooms means that a separate pool area on this deck is much smaller than on the *Classica*.

So much for the differences. These sleek and modern-looking vessels are most attractive. While they don't match the facilities of the Costa vessels that came after them, they are already a huge step up from the oldest ships in the fleet. A two-level theater and spacious lounge areas are among the highlights, as is a huge buffet area which is made even better by the large adjacent outdoor café at the stern. Public areas lack atriums and other elaborate features but are nicely designed. My favorite area on these ships is the circular disco at the very top of the ship. Besides being a great place to dance the night away under the stars, it doubles as a good observation area during the daytime.

The accommodations on both ships are surprisingly excellent. Room sizes are generous and the most recent refurbishment resulted in a much brighter and more cheerful décor, the lack of which had been my only real complaint about the rooms before. Many rooms are big

enough for families but you should be aware that children's facilities are extremely limited on these vessels. These ships were built before the balcony became an important feature. Thus, although there is a large variety of outside accommodations to choose from, you won't find any balconies at all. Furthermore, almost all rooms have old-fashioned portholes rather than big picture windows. These are minor considerations in the overall cruise experience, but are worth mentioning because, no doubt, some people might be disappointed if they weren't forewarned. Others might even want to avoid these ships altogether for this reason, but I don't consider it sufficient reason to do so.

Costa Concordia

Year Built: 2006	Gross Tonnage: 112,000
Length: 951 feet	Beam: 116 feet
Passengers: 3,000	Passenger Decks: 13
Crew Size: 1,150	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.6:1
Stateroom Size: 185-430 sq ft	Space Ratio: 37.3

Only recently making its debut, the *Costa Concordia* takes over the reigns as the largest ship in the fleet. Although even larger than the current fleet leaders – the *Costa Fortuna* and *Magica*, which are described below – it is not that different from them. Furthermore, if you've been on a Carnival *Conquest*-class vessel, then you'll recognize this ship as being based on that plan. There are four swimming pools, two of which can be covered. This is because Costa intends to have the *Concordia* and its yet-to-be-named sister ship (due in 2007) sailing in the Mediterranean year-round. Thus, you can take a dip in the pool regardless of the weather. Costa tells us that the ship's size and special capabilities for handling rougher seas make it ideally suited to cruising the Mediterranean during the winter months. Another outstanding feature of this ship is a two-level "wellness center" that includes the ship's spa plus much more. At more than 20,000 square-feet, it is one of the biggest facilities of its kind at sea. You can count on all the usual Costa style and activities, although this ship has the most diverse alternative dining possibilities in the fleet. Staterooms are extremely spacious and well designed, and even the lowest price category should meet just about anyone's needs.

Costa Europa

Year Built: 1986 [2003]	Gross Tonnage: 54,000
Length: 798 feet	Beam: 101 feet
Passengers: 1,494	Passenger Decks: 8
Crew Size: 650	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.3:1
Stateroom Size: 131-425 sq ft	Space Ratio: 36.1

Until the end of 2001 this ship was called the *Westerdam* and sailed for Holland America (which has a newer and bigger ship that is named *Westerdam*). It was rechristened and modestly refurbished for its transfer to Costa, where it replaced the older *Costa Riviera* as part of the line's extensive expansion and upgrading. The refurbishment was primarily aimed at making over the more subdued HAL atmosphere into the more lively Costa mold. This mid-size ship has traditional lines and styling. However, as it was built just before the real advent of the mega-liner, it has relatively fewer facilities when compared to newer ships. But all the standards are there, including a showroom, casino, lots of recreational facilities and enough lounges to keep your whistle wet throughout the cruise. It inherited the fine teak decks and lots of open spaces on deck and in public areas for which HAL is known, despite a less than stellar space ratio. The spa is good but shopping and facilities for children are limited as are alternative dining options. The location of the main dining room forward on the lowest passenger deck seems to lessen the glamour at mealtime. Accommodations are varied and you have to be careful in selecting a room class. While many rooms are just fine, the majority of staterooms in the lower price categories are significantly smaller than what I consider to be the minimum requirement for a comfortable voyage. There are no balconies.

Costa Fortuna/*Costa Magica*

Year Built: 2003/2004	Gross Tonnage: 105,000
Length: 890 feet	Beam: 124 feet
Passengers: 2,720	Passenger Decks: 12
Crew Size: 1,068	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.5:1
Stateroom Size: 180-483 sq ft	Space Ratio: 38.6

The current co-flagships of Costa's fleet, *Fortuna* and *Magica* are magnificent vessels built on the same platform as Carnival's *Triumph* and *Victory*, although they aren't exactly the same. There are even some statistical differences. Featuring a most impressive nine-deck-high atrium with dazzling artworks and architecture, these are wonderfully equipped vessels that have all the amenities you could expect. The three-level theater is hard to beat for lavish shows with its stage facilities and opera house-like design. The ships boast a large shopping area with a nice variety of stores and beautiful lounges that seem too numerous to count. There are four swimming pools (one with waterslide), including one in the large full-service spa. There is an impressive amount of deck space but, with such a large passenger capacity it is certainly needed. Each of the two main dining rooms is two levels. Perhaps the only thing lacking is a dedicated alternative restaurant, but the buffet serves this purpose.

The accommodations are first rate, with even the smallest and lowest-priced inside rooms being generous in size. There is no point in upgrading one or two categories just to get more room because you most likely won't need it and, more importantly, won't get it (the next size increase is way up on the accommodations ladder). The décor is typically lively Costa in style. A large percentage of the outside rooms have balconies. There are very few suites but there are a number of more affordable mini-suites. Even standard rooms are, by ship standards, big enough to handle small families. But these vessels, like others in the Costa fleet, don't have quite as many facilities for children as the American lines do.

Costa Victoria

Year Built: 1996 [2004]	Gross Tonnage: 76,000
Length: 828 feet	Beam: 106 feet
Passengers: 1,928	Passenger Decks: 10
Crew Size: 800	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.4:1
Stateroom Size: 120-431 sq ft	Space Ratio: 39.4

This is another beautiful new ship that most travelers will be proud to say they have sailed on. The exterior, except for the three bunched funnels, looks much like the newer and larger *Costa Atlantica* or *Mediterranea*. The decks are named after Italian operas and contain beautiful and mostly well-designed public areas. These include a dramatic multi-level atrium called the Planetarium and the excellent Concorde Plaza forward observation lounge complete with waterfall. This is a three-level affair and is quite unusual in its design. The two-level Festival Show Lounge is at the rear of the ship, not the most common spot on today's ships. Nonetheless, it's a great place to take in some entertainment. The ship has numerous bars and lounges, a good-size shopping area and lots of spacious public spaces. Recreational facilities include a full spa and an outside promenade on the upper deck. Compared to many other Costa vessels, the *Victoria* has a more subdued and rich feel, rather than tons of glitz.

There are two separate single-level main dining rooms. They are quite attractive but not spectacular, and neither is as massive as on many ships of this size. The galley is in-between the two rooms and experienced cruisers know what that means: it can be tricky to get to the room at the stern and you may find yourself having to hunt for the dining room the first couple of times until you get used to the layout. Alternative dining options are limited, but the good news is that they have a great pizzeria on the deck above the buffet.

The one significant disappointment on the *Costa Victoria* is that the staterooms are, on the whole, considerably smaller than on most other new ships, especially as compared to the newer Costa vessels. You have to upgrade considerably to get a room that's on par with

the lowest-priced rooms on the *Atlantica*-class or *Fortuna*-class ships. And, here again, many rooms have portholes instead of windows. On the positive side, the décor is bright and cheerful and even the small rooms are fairly well designed and functional. The recent refurbishment was primarily done to add balconies to a number of outside rooms. These are on decks 9 and 10. Besides adding to the view, they make those rooms seem larger. You can easily spot this section of the ship as the balconies stick out over the sides of the ship.

⚓ MSC CRUISES

☎ (800) 666-9333
Website: *www.msccruises.com*
Officers: Italian.
Ships' Registry: Italy or Panama.
Fleet: 8 ships; 1 under construction.

MSC is a major player in Europe even though it is practically unknown to most American travelers. This, however, will be changing as time goes by, since MSC, taking a cue from Costa, entered the winter Caribbean market in 2004. The company was originally called Mediterranean Shipping Cruises. This is a reflection of its original business – which was cargo shipping. However, the well-heeled owner of the line has decided to enter the cruise market in a big way. Formerly having only a few small ships that were low on luxury and low on looks, the company has been introducing newer and bigger vessels (although most are still somewhat small by the standards of many mass-market lines) at a furious pace. Some of these are newbuilds while others were acquired from the former First European (Festival) cruise line. While their older ships lack many important amenities and aren't anything to gawk at, their newer entries are, indeed, fine vessels. What I see as their only significant drawback is that the staterooms are on the small side and you have to go up to the suite category in order to have a room comparable in size to many other lines (including Costa). But then your cruise will no longer be in the budget category. The small size can be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that European cruise travelers don't seem to place as much emphasis on personal space as Americans do. At least they haven't in the past. That's sure to change with what has become available from Costa and other competitors.

The experience on MSC is thoroughly Italian – again, like Costa – but quite different in many ways. Here the atmosphere and cruise style is more sophisticated, with less outrageous fun and games for which Costa is known. Their ships, even the newest and best, are more refined in style and have less glitz. Whether or not this is better, of course, depends upon your own preferences.

Armonia/*Sinfonia*

Year Built: 2004/2002
Length: 823 feet
Passengers: 1,566
Crew Size: 760
Stateroom Size: 150-235 sq ft
Gross Tonnage: 58,600
Beam: 89 feet
Passenger Decks: 9
Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.1:1
Space Ratio: 37.4

Once the pride and joy of Festival Cruises (which didn't last long thanks to their bankruptcy), MSC knew a good bargain when it saw one and picked up the former *European Vision* (*Armonia*) and *European Star* (*Sinfonia*) at an auction. They made some changes to bring them into line with MSC's way of doing things. These were lovely ships to begin with and the small transformation hasn't hurt.

Although the twins are relatively narrow in beam and have a somewhat boxy look (not entirely atypical of many new generation ships), there is still something very attractive and impressive about their exterior appearance. The interiors nicely juxtapose traditional and modern styling in a colorful and comfortable way. The ships are fairly spacious and well laid out. In addition to a large health club and two swimming pools, sports enthusiasts will find a golf simulator. You'll also discover two separate shopping areas, a two-level show lounge, theater and disco. The two-deck reception foyer is overlooked by a pretty café. Kids of all ages are well taken care of in a children's facility and in the separate teen's club. Regular staterooms are adequate in size, enhanced by cheerful color schemes, modern styling and excellent utilization of space. However, if you like to have lots of room, consider upgrading to a suite (which are not overly large themselves).

Lirica

Year Built: 2003
Length: 831 feet
Passengers: 1,590
Crew Size: 760
Stateroom Size: 140-251 sq ft
Gross Tonnage: 58,600
Beam: 84 feet
Passenger Decks: 9
Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.1:1
Space Ratio: 36.9

The first new-build for the MSC fleet in a long time (several relatively new ships were acquired from other lines), the *Lirica* marked the beginning of an aggressive expansion of MSC, along with a considerable upgrade in facilities from what the line had offered in the past. MSC had long been known in Europe for providing a well-run cruise experience, and now they have some ships that physically match the level of service. This one has two restaurants as well as a pizzeria and grill, several lounges, a good-sized theater, full-service spa and related facilities, disco, and a decent level of facilities for children. Moreover, it isn't just a quantitative leap but a qualitative one. The décor is simply beautiful in a mostly refined sort of way but there's a hint of splashiness in the imaginative use of dazzling color schemes.

The public areas are on a par with anything that other European (and American) lines can offer in the Mediterranean market. The exterior of the ship is also beautiful. It has a modern but very sleek look. Part of this is because it is rather long, given the narrow beam. In fact, it is somewhat unusual for a ship of this overall size to have been built so narrow.

You will notice that none of MSC's newest and best ships (this one, plus the *Opera* and *Musica*) have very impressive space ratios. This is not because the public areas are inadequately sized. In fact, the public areas are generally very spacious. It is due to the fact that the majority of staterooms are so small. In fact, all of the standard cabins are 140 square feet, which I consider unacceptably small despite the pleasant décor and basic functionality of their design. Suites have a range in size of only a few square feet from smallest to largest and, as you can see, they are small for suites. Furthermore, despite the high level of service and luxury on MSC – especially for the price – being forced to upgrade to a suite to get a decent amount of space will mean that a cruise on this ship may not wind up being the big bargain it seems at first glance. On the positive side, *Lirica* offers balconies on about 20% of its rooms.

Melody

Year Built: 1982 [1997]	Gross Tonnage: 36,500
Length: 672 feet	Beam: 89 feet
Passengers: 1,076	Passenger Decks: 9
Crew Size: 535	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.0:1
Stateroom Size: 137-427 sq ft	Space Ratio: 33.9

Neither a beauty nor a wall-flower, the *Melody* has fairly traditional styling and a snow-white exterior (some trim in a darker color would improve the hull appearance). Most of the public areas are located on two upper decks, one of which contains two pools and a spa. All are functional. Unfortunately, the main dining room (on a lower deck) has a very crowded feel, almost as though it was put in as an afterthought. But the quality of the food (mainly Italian) is very good and is served by a capable staff. One surprisingly excellent facility on *Melody* is the large children's recreation area, which even has its own pool. This ship does attract many families with children, which may or may not be a plus to you. Accommodations are very colorful and comfortable. The lower-priced cabins especially benefit from the thoughtful layout and good use of space. If you can afford to upgrade about four categories you'll get a room with a sitting area and a decent amount of space. Below that the rooms are kind of cramped. Like all the older ships in the MSC fleet, this vessel is good for the budget traveler who doesn't need or expect first-class luxuries.

Monterey

Year Built: 1952 [1997]
Length: 564 feet
Passengers: 576
Crew Size: 280
Stateroom Size: 65-344 sq ft
Gross Tonnage: 20,040
Beam: 76 feet
Passenger Decks: 4
Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.1:1
Space Ratio: 34.8

A small ship by today's standards, *Monterey* qualifies for the "venerable ship" category, meaning it's kind of dated. It's also a less luxurious vessel despite a number of refurbishments. This was originally built as a commercial vessel and, even after its transformation to a recreational one, some common cruise amenities have been left out. There's a good-sized sports deck and pleasant outdoor pool, but the fitness center is very limited. You'll also notice that the *Monterey* lacks any kind of spectacular visual centerpiece. The appealing dining room serves tasty Continental cuisine that incorporates many Italian dishes.

Of the numerous stateroom categories offered, too many are unacceptably small and you will have to upgrade considerably to get a decent-sized cabin. Even the most spacious rooms are lacking pretty furnishings but they are, at least, functional. If you don't set your expectations too high, a cruise aboard the *Monterey* might well be enjoyable, even though it certainly won't qualify as a true luxury experience.

Musica

Year Built: 2006
Length: 964 feet
Passengers: 2,550
Crew Size: 1,000
Stateroom Size: 150-269 sq ft
Gross Tonnage: 89,000
Beam: 105 feet
Passenger Decks: 13
Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.6:1
Space Ratio: 30.2

Continuing MSC's new tradition of naming their ships with a musical theme, the *Musica* made its debut in spring of 2006. It is MSC's largest ship (and will be joined with an as yet unnamed sister in 2007). This is a spectacular vessel – easily surpassing the pleasing public areas of *Lirica* and *Opera*. Boasting a combined Art Nouveau/Art Deco theme, the centerpiece is a three-deck waterfall in the main lobby. A piano on a crystal floor appears to be suspended in air. There's a three-deck theater, plus another show lounge. The Garden Restaurant has beautiful frescoed ceilings and a panoramic view. Other dining options include a sushi-bar (looks like the Europeans have also discovered Japanese cuisine) and a self-service pizzeria. Although the rooms are not overly large, 85% of them are on the outside and two-thirds will have a private balcony.

Opera

Year Built: 2004
Length: 763 feet
Passengers: 1,756
Crew Size: 800
Stateroom Size: 140-251 sq ft
Gross Tonnage: 58,600
Beam: 84 feet
Passenger Decks: 9
Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.2:1
Space Ratio: 33.4

This ship is the same GRT as *Lirica* and most of the other statistics aren't that different. One could almost call them sister vessels, but there are just enough differences that I've chosen to list the *Opera* separately. There is relatively little difference in public areas as far as the nature of the facilities and the layout is concerned. The décor is quite different, however. Unfortunately, everything that was said about rooms on the *Lirica* applies here as well, since this aspect of the two ships is identical. The arrangement of the stateroom decks on *Opera* has been changed quite a bit to allow for more outside rooms and more balconies. On the other hand, there are fewer inside rooms, meaning that budget prices will be a little harder to come by on this vessel.

Rhapsody

Year Built: 1977 [1997]
Length: 540 feet
Passengers: 750
Crew Size: 350
Stateroom Size: 87-265 sq ft
Gross Tonnage: 17,495
Beam: 75 feet
Passenger Decks: 8
Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.1:1
Space Ratio: 23.3

This ship is similar in appearance to the *Melody* and *Monterey*. It's not very large and lacks many luxury appointments that are common on today's vessels. However, it does provide a pleasant cruise experience without busting your budget.

The public areas are surprisingly pleasing to the eye, with more open space than you would expect from the dismal space ratio. With the small number of passengers it just barely gets by on that score. It lacks separate facilities for many activities, with a single multi-functional room that serves as the ship's show lounge (for which it is inadequate) and a gathering spot. There is a separate club for dancing. Recreational facilities are somewhat limited, but you will find a small gym and sauna, along with a nice pool area that features a jogging track on the deck above it. The dining room is also pretty and the wait staff is eager to please, although the service certainly isn't white glove. Although the staterooms are colorful, mostly functional and pleasantly furnished, many of them are too small and you will almost certainly be feeling cramped by the end of a week-long cruise. Accommodations at the high end of the price scale are bigger, but most people would choose this line for value and you'll lose that element if you upgrade your room to the best levels.

⚓ P & O CRUISES

☎ *800-340-7674*
Website: *www.pocruises.com*
Officers: British.
Ships' Registry: Great Britain.
Fleet: 5 ships.

Some veteran cruisers might remember when the P&O logo appeared on ships of Princess Cruises. That's because P&O used to own Princess. When Carnival Corporation acquired Princess it also acquired P&O. However, because of legal considerations (the largely British stockholders of the former P&O business entity), this is operated as a completely separate subsidiary except for the fact that Princess and P&O are still "trading" ships on occasion. Does this matter to the cruise passenger? Not much, unless you're interested in these companies from an investment or historical standpoint. Where it does come into play is in the quality of the cruise experience. The news here is positive because P&O maintains a standard of excellence equal to that of Princess in its ships and service. This is a first class operation all the way. And so it should be, considering that P&O has been in the business of sailing since 1837. P&O does have limited sailings in the North American market, but most of its passengers are from Europe.

Read the ship descriptions carefully because, as with many European lines, P&O does have some older ships without the diverse facilities found on more contemporary vessels. Their newest ships have a full range of activities and programs, including personal enrichment programs ranging from cookery to language classes and from flower arranging to psychology. Spas, lavish entertainment and beautiful public areas characterize the best ships in the fleet. They have children's programs segmented by age group.

Dining on P&O vessels is also first class, as they have engaged some of the most talented chefs in Europe. They have only recently begun to introduce alternative dining options such as the American lines have. This is available on only about half the fleet (the rest offer a choice between the traditional main dining room and the buffet).

There is one important factor that you should consider before booking a cruise with P&O. All of their Mediterranean itineraries are round-trip from their home port in Southampton, England. Because of this, P&O cruises in this market are a minimum of 12 days and have a considerable number of days at sea. For some people, a longer trip with more days at sea isn't a problem. If you have the time (and the extra money for a longer cruise) and enjoy lazy days at sea, then the itineraries can be a plus. There is no doubt that they offer a varied

selection of ports, including many that are hard or impossible to find on the major "American" lines.

Arcadia

Year Built: 2005
Length: 935 feet
Passengers: 1,968
Crew Size: 880
Stateroom Size: 170-516 sq ft
Gross Tonnage: 85,000
Beam: 106 feet
Passenger Decks: 11
Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.2:1
Space Ratio: 43.2

Not that the ships of P&O were ever bad, but the line goes one step further with the newest, largest and most feature-loaded ship in their fleet. *Arcadia* boasts the greatest choice of facilities in the fleet on a beautiful vessel that's certainly a match for any of the American companies. The exterior is stunning and the interior design combines the best of refined elegance with a splash of showiness in some areas. Original works of art grace the ship in many places, including a gallery just to show them off. *Arcadia* adds a dramatic flair with its outside elevators that span nine of its decks. There's also a three-deck atrium.

Sports facilities are extensive and feature several large pools, including one that can be covered in bad weather, tennis courts and a place for mini-team soccer (remember, this is an English ship). The spa facilities are first rate. A three-level main theater has excellent stage facilities for lavish productions ranging from cabaret to hits from the London stage. For late night entertainment, there's a great nightclub. The two-level main restaurant, the Meridian, is gorgeous. Alternative dining options are on a par with any you'll find on the sea today. Besides having a 24-hour buffet (the Belvedere Food Court as P&O terms it), you can dine at Arcadian Rhodes, a specialty restaurant featuring the cuisine of a noted British chef. Perhaps even more appealing is the Orchid Restaurant (with adjacent bar of the same name) perched on the top of the ship to provide panoramic views while you dine. The cuisine here is a fusion of several Asian styles.

With the smallest stateroom measuring 170 square feet, you don't have to worry about upgrading to get a decent living space. Room décor is most pleasant and all categories of accommodation have a large list of conveniences and amenities. Upgraded room categories reach into real luxury levels.

Artemis

Year Built: 1984 (refurb 2005)	Gross Tonnage: 45,000
Length: 757 feet	Beam: 95 feet
Passengers: 1,196	Passenger Decks: 8
Crew Size: 520	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.3:1
Stateroom Size: 168-805 sq ft	Space Ratio: 37.6

Until recently this ship was known as the *Royal Princess* and its recent refurbishment was done on the occasion of its transfer to P&O Cruises and rechristening as the *Artemis*. This ship was a big favorite with Princess passengers and many people sailed on it exclusively. There was a big groan of disappointment when Princess made it known that the ship would leave the line, but the decision was made because it was too small to fit in with Princess' new brand of cruising. For those who prefer more intimate ships, the well-designed *Artemis* is a welcome addition to the P&O fleet. It will be their smallest ship. It will also be the only ship in the fleet that is entirely child-free. Again, this is something that will immediately turn you on or turn you off, depending upon your needs and outlook. No doubt, however, there is a need for this in the world of cruising.

Small but still large enough to incorporate most of the facilities and amenities that today's passengers expect, *Artemis'* outline is graceful, with a superstructure that curves gently up at the bow and outward and then up at the stern. The large funnel, often the least attractive feature, actually enhances her overall appearance due to the shape and placement almost at the stern. A good amount of open teak deck space allows people room to jog or walk under covered promenades. The ship's beautiful atrium spans three decks and was one of the first to be incorporated into a liner. All of the public areas are attractive and well designed. Many are essentially smaller versions of what has now proved to be popular with cruise travelers on larger ships. The spa is quite large for a ship of this size. The Horizon Lounge on the top deck of the ship is a large and very attractive room for various activities but will be extremely useful as an observation point that is protected from the weather. There are three good-sized swimming pools, more than enough for a ship of this size. If there is one area where *Artemis* lacks, it is in the variety of dining options. There isn't much to choose from except the buffet if you don't want to eat in the main dining room.

Perhaps the strongest feature of the *Artemis* is the accommodations, which are all located on the outside, a rarity on cruise ships unless you include luxury-yacht classes. Plus, a large percentage of the staterooms have private verandas. The rooms are larger than is common, especially in the lower price categories. In fact, it boasts some of the largest standard staterooms at sea of any mass-market cruise

ship. And there are plenty of upgrading options if you want even more room and luxury.

Aurora

Year Built: 2000
Length: 886 feet
Passengers: 1,870
Crew Size: 850
Stateroom Size: 150-575 sq ft
Gross Tonnage: 76,000
Beam: 106 feet
Passenger Decks: 10
Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.2:1
Space Ratio: 40.6

The year 2000 was a big one for P&O as they introduced two approximately equal-sized ships. The nature of the facilities on this ship as compared to the *Oceana* aren't that different, but they aren't at all like sisters. Their layouts are almost completely different. From an exterior point of view, the differences are also significant as this ship has a more traditional funnel while the *Oceana* features a more Princess-like disguised funnel area.

The facilities on *Aurora* are varied and extensive, although not quite to the degree of *Arcadia*, especially when it comes to dining choices. Although this ship is beautiful in a refined sort of way, most of the major public areas are one deck high, which makes it somewhat less impressive, especially on first-glance. But it grows on you. There is a multi-deck atrium. Unlike *Artemis*, children are welcome on this ship. In fact, relative to its size, it has the best facilities for children of any P&O ship (none of the others can distinguish themselves in this regard). If you are traveling with children and plan to sail with P&O, I strongly suggest the *Aurora*.

Staterooms are good for the most part. The smallest could be a tad bigger, although they are fairly well designed and should be sufficient for most people. The lowest category of outside rooms are bigger, but the layout isn't all that good. They are on the narrow side, which will make you think you are being squeezed. So, if you want an outside room, go up a couple of categories. Not only will you get still more space, but the appearance is much better and you'll find that the extra price is worth it. Mini-suite and above are all at a luxury level.

Oceana

Year Built: 2000
Length: 857 feet
Passengers: 2,016
Crew Size: 870
Stateroom Size: 135-538 sq ft
Gross Tonnage: 77,000
Beam: 106 feet
Passenger Decks: 10
Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.3:1
Space Ratio: 38.2

Some of the features on this ship that are different from *Aurora*, above, that I find most appealing are the spacious four-deck atrium and the easy layout of most public facilities off of the atrium. The abundance of outside deck space will please those who like to lie

around without feeling like everyone else on the ship is surrounding them. There's also plenty of walking and jogging space in addition to the wrap-around promenade deck. Alternative dining facilities aren't that good, but there are two separate main dining rooms which appeal to those who seek a somewhat more intimate atmosphere.

Accommodations on this ship are pleasantly decorated and very comfortably furnished. However, there is a problem when it comes to size. All of the inside rooms are too small and a large number of outside rooms are, at 155 square feet, only just beyond what I consider to be the minimum acceptable amount of room. The majority of outside rooms do boast balconies.

Oriana

Year Built: 1995	Gross Tonnage: 69,000
Length: 853 feet	Beam: 105 feet
Passengers: 1,822	Passenger Decks: 10
Crew Size: 800	Passenger/Crew Ratio: 2.3:1
Stateroom Size: 150-497 sq ft	Space Ratio: 37.9

This ship is almost a smaller version of the *Oceana*. While the layouts are different enough, the overall atmosphere is the same, as are the facilities. The strong points of the ships are the same, although the *Oriana* would have to be put second when it comes to eye-appeal.

Where the *Oriana* trumps the *Oceana* is in the accommodations. Aesthetically, they're pretty much the same, but the smallest rooms (including all of the inside cabins) on this ship at least barely make the size required for a comfortable cruise experience. Note that outside rooms without balconies on this ship are the same size as inside cabins, so you're not really gaining very much for your extra money except for a window (and not a picture window at that). However, once you get up into the balcony category the total size is a generous 250 square feet, making this type of accommodation truly first rate. Bathtubs are a feature in this class of room.

THE DEMISE OF FESTIVAL CRUISES

During the 1990s and as late as 2003, Festival Cruises (marketed as First European in the United States) was a major player on the Mediterranean cruise scene. They offered a combination of some smaller and older ships, along with a few newer luxury vessels, all at an attractive price. But, like so many other businesses, they fell into the trap of expanding too quickly. They struggled through financial difficulties for a time but eventually had to throw in the towel in 2004. However, the best ships were acquired by MSC Cruises and renamed.

● Non-Mass Market Lines

Just as "mass market" wasn't meant as a knock, "non-mass market" doesn't always mean top-of-the-line. The lines in this group run the gamut from what can be termed budget cruise operators to the most expensive cruise experiences in the world. Included are many whose price/luxury description would fit well into the mass market category. However, they are still non-mass market because the majority of you won't be sailing on them. This is simply a matter of physics: these lines have smaller fleets. A majority have four or fewer ships, and those with bigger fleets have small ships that carry far fewer passengers than ships of the mass market lines. Non-mass market lines often offer unusual itineraries. Again, this will be explored in much greater depth in the section on evaluating itineraries.

Most of the lines of this type operating in the Mediterranean region can also be subdivided by whether they are essentially "American" or "European." The differences between them are of the same nature as between those in the mass market category. In those cases where it isn't that easy to categorize, I'll explain why I put them where I did.

"American" Cruise Lines

CUNARD: ☎ (800) 728-6273; *www.cunard.com.* This famous line has operated some of the best known vessels in the history of cruising. It still caters to the upscale traveler and is noted for its fine service and British feel. Although Cunard is the most "British" of all cruise lines, I've put it with the Yanks because they have always attracted a large number of American passengers, even in Europe. Their entire fleet (three ships, including the famous *Queen Elizabeth 2* and new *Queen Mary 2* along with the smaller *Caronia* and one more coming in 2007) currently serve the Mediterranean at least some of the time. However, many of their itineraries combine Mediterranean ports with places in other parts of Western Europe or trans-Atlantic runs.

CRYSTAL CRUISES: ☎ (800) 446-6620; *www.crystalcruises.com*. Crystal is one of the most honored of all cruise lines and people looking for luxury will certainly not go wrong with this line. What does make Crystal different from the other stratosphere-priced lines is their ships. While the high-budget lines such as Radisson, Silversea and Seabourn, are almost exclusively small-ship operators (generally under 500 passengers and sometimes considerably less than that), Crystal's ships have a capacity of about 1,000. As such, their ships do have the amenities that the large vessels of the mass-market lines feature, including a big showroom. This is attractive to many people and gives Crystal a niche in the cruise market, and it provides its pas-

sengers the best of both worlds. That's if you can handle the fare. Their small fleet always has at least one ship (and sometimes two) in the Mediterranean for several months.

OCEANIA CRUISES: ☎ (800) 531-5658; *www.oceaniacruises.com*. Oceania is still one of the new kids on the block, having begun operations in the latter part of 2003. They acquired two very nice "R"-class ships from the former Renaissance Cruise Line that went bankrupt. (Despite the trend towards bigger ships, apparently this type of mid-sized ship is still in demand since almost all of the Renaissance fleet was bought by a number of cruise lines, including Princess.) Oceania provides a well-run and fairly sophisticated cruise experience that will be appreciated by the veteran cruiser. They are not as high-priced as Crystal or Radisson, but are definitely more costly than the mass-market lines.

ORIENT LINES: ☎ (800) 333-7300; *www.orientlines.com.* Orient offers cruise tours geared to the more experienced traveler as their itineraries are quite port-intensive. They also appeal to that segment of the cruising public that prefers a smaller and more classic ship. This is evidenced by the fact that their only vessel is the well-traveled *Marco Polo*. In fact, a few years ago the line expanded to two (then three for a brief time) before realizing that their client-base was limited and they liked the *Marco Polo*!

RADISSON SEVEN SEAS CRUISES: ☎ (866) 314-3212; *www.rssc.com*. This upscale line is considered to be one of the best in the world if you are a member of the *Condé Nast*-set. Their fleet has about a half-dozen ships that are all quite small and personalized service is the name of the game. On most of their ships all of the staterooms are suites, so you'll always have plenty of room to spread out. On the other hand, prices are high; if you're working on a tight budget, look elsewhere. Their Mediterranean itineraries are extensive and feature many of the less frequently called on ports.

SEABOURN: ☎ (800) 929-9391; *www.seabourn.com.* Although I've already referred to several cruise lines as being in the luxury class, few reach the level that Seabourn achieves. Seabourn vessels are almost in a class by themselves, with prices to match and a more formal experience all around. Perfect for the sophisticated traveler who doesn't have to worry about price, Seabourn's fleet consists of several yacht-like ships, each carrying 200 or fewer passengers. They offer one of the widest varieties of Mediterranean itineraries. Like Radisson, this includes many unusual ports. Their itineraries tend to concentrate on small areas of the Mediterranean (e.g., the Riviera) instead of trying to cover the major ports throughout the region.

SILVERSEA: ☎ (800) 722-9955; *www.silversea.com.* All four ships in the Silversea fleet are of high quality and at least two are based in the

Mediterranean for at least part of the year. Everything that was said about Seabourn can be applied here, including a large choice of itineraries. This line is clearly for the discriminating traveler who demands the best and is willing to pay for it. It features small, intimate ships, although they are larger than on Seabourn.

STAR CLIPPERS: ☎ (800) 442-0551; *www.starclippers.com.* As one of the two major lines operating true sailing ships, the three wonderful ships of this line evoke images of a different era that, up to now, you've seen only in the movies. Besides the personalized luxury of small sailing ships, Star Clipper vessels have more than 30 different Mediterranean ports of call, including some that aren't visited by any other line.

WINDSTAR: ☎ (800) 258-7245; *www.windstarcruises.com.* This is the other "sailing ship" line besides Star Clippers. Windstar's vessels have a decided luxury-yacht feeling that will definitely appeal to the upscale traveler who has a big budget. The company does an outstanding job in all aspects of the cruise experience. Their vessels are the largest sailing ships in the Mediterranean.

"Foreign" Cruise Lines

AIDA CRUISES: *www.aida.de.* A German company that is part of the P&O Group serves mostly German-speaking passengers. They have a good range of Mediterranean itineraries at moderate prices on their few ships, which are all relatively small.

AIRTOURS SUN CRUISES: *www.airtours.com*. A subsidiary of a British charter air carrier, Sun Cruises has a growing fleet varying from hum-drum to quite nice. Their passengers consist mostly of Brits looking for a value cruise. A strong point is that they have some good Mediterranean itineraries.

FRED. OLSEN CRUISES: ☎ (800) 688-3876; *www.fredolsencruises.co.uk.* More British-style cruising despite the company's Norwegian origins. Americans will probably not feel uncomfortable since it is like Cunard in many ways. However, their smaller and older vessels offer a much lower level of amenities then many of today's cruise passengers are looking for.

GOLDEN SUN CRUISES: ☎ (877) 244-8004; *www.goldensuncruises.com*. This Greek company has two modest ships offering Aegean cruises only. The clientele is almost exclusively European and they do not cater to those seeking a luxury experience.

HAPAG-LLOYD LINE: *www.hl-cruises.com.* The four ships of this longstanding German travel conglomerate range from excellent to among the best in the world. HL cruises features smaller ships (the largest carries under 500 passengers) and can almost be considered

the German equivalent of a line such as Radisson Seven Seas. German is the language used throughout by guests and cruise staff, although you might find some English spoken. They have a nice selection of itineraries.

ISLAND CRUISES: *www.islandcruises.com.* This is another British-based operator featuring a casual cruise experience at modest prices. They recently added the former Celebrity ship *Horizon* (since both Celebrity and Island are Royal Caribbean subsidiaries) to their line-up, giving them two ships. The *Island Escape* is also a very nice vessel.

KRISTINA CRUISES: *www.kristinacruises.com.* This Finnish family-run company has two smaller and older ships, one of which spends quite a bit of time in the Mediterranean. Not exactly a budget operator.

LOUIS CRUISE LINES: *www.louiscruises.com.* Based in Cyprus, this line operates nine different ships, primarily in the Eastern Mediterranean. There's a definite English influence in the style of their cruises. The ships range from old and extremely modest all the way up to quite modern, although none qualifies as super-luxurious.

ROYAL OLYMPIA CRUISES: *www.roc.gr*. A Greek company with traditions that go back many years, the line was popular with Americans and European for their fine itineraries and traditional cruise experience. Those were in their former "glory" years. They had a large fleet of small vessels that, even by then European standards, were getting far too old and ragged to attract most contemporary cruisers. So they spent a lot of money building two new ships and they couldn't handle the tab. The bank repossessed their best ships and ROC is now limited to three smaller and older ships which I can't recommend for anyone who is used to cruising 21st century-style! Royal Olympia (formerly Royal Olympic) itineraries are limited to the Greek Isles and the Aegean.

STAR CRUISES: ☎ *800-327-7030; www.starcruises.com*. Although this is one of the largest cruise line sin the world, few American travelers are familiar with it. The owner of Norwegian Cruise Lines, Star Cruises is an Asian-based company. Under the Star Cruises brand, it is the largest cruise line in Asia. For 2006, they have announced their entry into the Mediterranean market. *Superstar Libra* (formerly *Norwegian Sea*) will home port in Valetta, Malta and offer varying itineraries of seven to 12 days. The concentration will be on the eastern part of the region (Italy and points east). Star cruises features an Asian crew, as well as Asian cuisine and general style.

SWAN HELLENIC: ☎ (877) 800-7926; *www.swanhellenic.com.* Despite the decidedly Greek name, this is a British-owned company (another indirect Carnival subsidiary through the P&O Group) with

only one ship. The moderate-sized *Minerva II* happens to be a very nice vessel that offers a fine cruising experience. Like many other lines with a single vessel, Swan Hellenic has a variety of different itineraries, each given on a limited basis and with the emphasis on "discovery" – that is, port-intensive cruises.

FLEXIBLE CRUISING

May, 2005 saw the debut of **easyCruise**, the brain-child of the European business tycoon who introduced easyJet to travelers. This is a flexible way to cruise. Their one ship (the **easyCruiseOne**) offers seven-day itineraries on the French and Italian Rivieras. Ports are St.-Tropez, Cannes, Nice, Monaco, Imperia (for San Remo), Genoa and Portofino. Reverse sailings are offered on alternating weeks. You can get on the ship at any port and get off where you like. The only requirement is that you stay for a minimum of two nights. Our spies tell us that the major cruise lines are interested in seeing how the public responds to this. Not that this line is any threat but the majors are interested to see if the concept works. If it does, don't be surprised to see it offered on other ships. The Cypriot-registered vessel was built in 1990 but was completely refurbished prior to its easyCruise inaugural. It's a small ship, carrying only 170 passengers. Facilities aren't bad considering the size, but it doesn't have everything that the larger ships can offer. If you want further information, take a look at their website: *www.easyCruise.com*. Actually, the idea of flexible cruising was not invented by easyCruise. **Ocean Village** is a British subsidiary of Carnival and has been offering a similar service for a few years. They currently have one small ship but will enter the big time in November, 2006 when the former *Regal Princess* is transferred from Carnival subsidiary Princess to Ocean Village. It will, of course, be renamed. Their website is *www.oceanvillageholidays.uk.*

● *Exploring the Mediterranean by Ferry*

In my mind if you want to cruise the Mediterranean then a cruise ship (in the broadest sense of the term) is the way to go, unless you have your own yacht or enough money to charter one! However, those of you who like to experience things in a different way – perhaps those who have explored Alaska by the Alaska Marine Highway ferry system might want to ferry through the Mediterranean. Well, it is possible to do so. You can even book passage on a freighter if you desire,

but this brief discussion will be limited to international ferry routes. Obviously, we won't be talking luxury here either. Frequency of service varies a great deal. Greek inter-island ferries generally run often and this is probably the best area for travel by ferry in the Mediterranean.

The main international routes run from Spain and France to Morocco and Tunisia and from Italy to Greece and Croatia. Malta is connected by ferry to Tunisia and to Italy. Major domestic services include (in addition to the Greek islands) a number of lines serving Genoa and Livorno, Italy with Sardinia (as well as the French island of Corsica). There are other lines as well. If you're interested in ferry travel, do some research to find exact routes, schedules and fares. A good place to begin is at *www.europe.org/mediterraneanseaferries,* which has general information and direct links to specific areas and routes.

Setting Priorities

Selecting Your Dream Cruise

With so many options for cruising the Mediterranean – different cruise lines, different ships, different styles, and different itineraries – it can be somewhat of a difficult (although fun) to select the right cruise for *you*. So, how do you choose the best cruise? Begin by defining "best" – what is best for one person will not be best for another. People have different priorities when vacationing, and cruising is no exception. Let's take a look at some of the major factors that will determine which cruise is going to be your dream come true.

The Cruise Line

Each line has a distinctive style or personality that is reflected throughout its fleet. Do you want a sophisticated luxury experience or a more fun-oriented cruise? Do you like refined elegance in the ship's public areas or is glitz more your style? Is this a romantic getaway for two or a family affair? Formal or informal? More or fewer dining choices? These and many other questions can help narrow down which cruise lines are in the running for your dollars. To a large degree, your available budget will also help determine what line or lines to consider. *Crystal* is, for example, a whole bunch more expensive than *Carnival*. You have to judge how much certain features of a cruise line (and the ship) are worth to you.

The Ship

Many ship features are determined by the line that owns them. But even on specific cruise lines there can be a great variation in the age, size, and facilities of different ships. The newer and larger ships are likely to have the most diverse facilities, dining choices and activities. But larger doesn't always mean better, since a lot of experienced travelers prefer a somewhat smaller vessel. Among the major lines there is often a big difference in the size of their largest ship compared to their smallest. Even when limiting the list just to ships with Mediterranean itineraries, as I did in the preceding section, the choices still reveal many differing types of ships. Related to the process of ship selection is choosing the category of stateroom. This is one of the most important factors and there will be a detailed discussion of this in the Practical Guide chapter, pages 79-80.

The Stateroom

Not only is the stateroom the single biggest determining factor in the cost of your cruise, it might well determine how happy you are with the ship you select. The two major factors affecting the price are whether the room is inside or outside and the location of the room (how high up, how far fore or aft). Inside rooms, obviously, have no window. However, on most ships (especially the newer ones) the size of the room is about the same as an outside room. So, unless you think you'll feel claustrophobic in an inside room or you just have to have that view or balcony, you can save a lot of money by going for an inside cabin. Outside rooms have a greater variety. They can be with or without balcony, regular window or floor-to-ceiling window, and so on. The cruise lines make it seem as if you just have to have a balcony in order to enjoy your cruise. Nonsense! How much time are you going to spend on the balcony? With all of the activities on board, the answer is not much. One other caution. Although outside rooms with an obstructed or partially obstructed view (because of blockage by lifeboats) are less expensive than other outside rooms of the same type, they're not worth it. If you're going to get an obstructed view you might as well save some money and get an inside cabin. Prices generally are higher within a specific cabin category if the room is towards the middle of the ship or if it is on a higher deck. The reason for this is that the farther up you are from the water or the farther away from the front and back, the more comfortable the ride. While this is theoretically true, the practical difference is rather slight and one has to wonder if the extra cost is worth it. On the other hand, cabins on the lowest decks sometimes have an isolated feel to them, especially on older ships where there may be only

a few cabins of this type, so I suggest not taking these unless you must conserve your pennies.

Excepting some of the most upgraded suites, which cost *mucho* bucks, ship cabins are considerably smaller than rooms at a land-based hotel. While many cruise line brochures don't give you a good picture of how big the cabin is (they'll tell you if you call and ask), you can count on a typical modern ship stateroom being anywhere between 150 and 185 square feet. This does not include a balcony. Some older ships may have a number of cabins that are even smaller, while a few can go up to around 200 square feet. Motel rooms typically start at around 250 square feet and luxury hotel rooms today are generally built in the 400 to 550 square-foot range. Ship cabins are well designed from a functionality standpoint, but don't expect to have a lot of walking room. If you are going to be traveling with children, try to select a ship that has bigger cabins. In my reviews, I usually downgrade any vessel where the size of the standard cabins is less than 150 square feet. Once you get to about 165 square feet and up, I consider that a decent size; but 180 or higher is better for more than two people. Be aware that cabin square-footage can vary even in a single category depending upon its location. Do not hesitate to ask the cruise line or your travel agent for the exact size of the cabin they plan to assign to you. Ask for a larger cabin if it seems too small.

The Cost

How much you pay for a cruise is determined largely by the above factors as well as the itinerary. The longer the cruise, the more it will cost. However, longer cruises are often less expensive on a per-night basis. Costs are also influenced by when you go. Although the Mediterranean season isn't a year-round market like the Caribbean, it still has ups and downs. Periods around holidays are higher, while the beginning and end of the season are usually less expensive. However, the weather may not be as good during these times.

The Ports of Call

Look for an itinerary that hits more of the places you want to see than other itineraries. There will be more information on this in the next section, when we evaluate itineraries.

Wrapping it all up and weighing the relative merits of these and other factors isn't always easy. Keep in mind that cruising to the Mediterranean is far different than cruising to, for example, Alaska. There, many people have chosen to take a cruise because they can't get to most of the important places of interest *except* by ship.

Europe, and the Mediterranean region in particular are reachable by land, either on your own or as part of an escorted tour. But for many people, the opportunity of visiting some of the great cities of the world in addition to a fabulous cruise experience is an appealing option without equal.

● Information Sources

There are many sources for general information on cruise lines and on cruising itself. The cruise line brochures are a necessary piece of literature before you make any decision, but I cannot emphasize enough that these are marketing tools. As a result, they're often far from objective. The same, of course, can be said for their websites. There are also more general sites about cruise ships but, here too, many are run by travel agencies looking for business or feature only certain cruise lines. The **Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA)** is an industry organization composed of all the major cruise lines and many smaller ones. Their website, *www.cruising.org*, also paints the experience in a purely positive light, as you might expect. Despite this, it is a useful site because it contains a wealth of information, both statistical and otherwise. You can call CLIA at ☎ (212) 921-0066.

In addition to CLIA, I recommend that web surfers check out at least a few of the following sites:

- ⚓ ***www.cruisecompete.com.*** This is an interesting place to check for prices (more about that in the *Practical Information* chapter section on *Discounts*). The site has a lot of good general information on cruising.
- ⚓ ***www.cruiseone.com.*** Another place that sells cruises. They, too, can offer much that is useful in a general sort of way, but line and ship information does not include most of the European lines.
- ⚓ ***www.cruise2.com.*** This is a non-profit site devoted to providing information on cruising, cruise lines and ships. While it is quite comprehensive (including lines that aren't CLIA members), it is not always the most current. If you like the information here, then you might subscribe to *Cruise News Daily* (see below).
- ⚓ ***www.cruisecritic.com; www.cruisemates.com; www.cruiseopinion.com; www.cruisereviews.com;*** and ***www.sealetter.com*** are all good sources of information where you can read about other people's cruise experiences on various ships. Use this information to help you select the right ship for you. Be aware, however,

that some people will concentrate on one small negative aspect of their experience and let it interfere with an objective overall assessment. But the point is that the primary feature of these sites are reviews submitted by individual travelers like you that aren't influenced by monetary considerations from travel agents or the cruise lines themselves. In fact, *you* can send in a review of any ship you've cruised on and it will be added to their database.

THE ULTIMATE CRUISE FANATIC'S WEBSITE

For people who just can't learn enough and read enough about what is going on inside the world of cruising, there's ***Cruise News Daily***, *www.cruisenewsdaily.com*. It is written in newspaper fashion with timely reports on everything from new ships to itineraries that are being altered because of current weather conditions. Their staff has inside access to what is going on at the cruise lines and you can often learn things here before they become generally known. I look at it every day. That's the good part. The bad part is that what you get on their free website is just a synopsis of the full articles. You can see the full article only if you subscribe to their service. Subscription rates begin at about $20 for a month, although there are discounted rates for longer subscriptions and new subscribers. You receive the full text via e-mail either on a daily or weekly basis – the option is yours. The free site does offer access to some of their other features, including photos of ships under construction and a complete rundown on what ships are being built in the yards. It's a fascinating site but only for the dedicated cruise-aholic!

Evaluation of Ship Itineraries

A lot of readers, after having perused the ship descriptions earlier, will be ready to step aboard just about any ship. Not to burst your bubble, but the fact is that some cruise itineraries just aren't as good as others. This may not be of much concern if you flew to Europe solely for the undeniable pleasures of cruising *per se*. However, while that may be the case for a lot of people cruising in the Caribbean where one island often seems remarkably similar to another (not that I agree with that view), I doubt if this applies when

it comes to European cruising. So, what is the best itinerary and how does one go about finding it?

I used to list the actual itineraries for each ship and evaluate them on a case-by-case basis. But I can no longer do that because the cruise lines seem to change itineraries so often that it's impossible to keep the information timely in a book that comes out only occasionally. Mediterranean itineraries tend to differ more from one line to another than is the case in some other popular cruising markets because of the much greater number of possible ports of call. Always check itineraries in the most current cruise line brochures. However, in the last year or so I've seen an increasing number of instances where the cruise lines will change itineraries (or ships) prior to the printed expiration date of the brochure. Often you can find the most up-to-date itineraries on the cruise lines' websites. Regardless, you should always check at the time you book to make sure you're getting the itinerary you wanted.

The mass-market lines (especially the "American" lines) tend to visit the most famous ports on their itineraries. For someone who has never been to Europe or hasn't cruised in Europe, this will probably offer the most satisfactory selection of itineraries, since it usually covers the places most people have heard of and want to see. The mass-market "European" lines have similar itineraries, but they often visit places that are a bit off the main tourist track. Lines with smaller vessels, especially the most upscale ones, don't necessarily neglect the "big" attractions, but there is no doubt that they have a much broader selection of somewhat less-visited ports, as well as places that the largest ships and cruise lines never call on. You should also be aware that most large ships from the mass market lines usually have only one itinerary in the Mediterranean that they repeat throughout the cruising season. It is also common for them to have two and sometimes three alternating itineraries. Smaller vessels can do this also, but lines that have a limited number of ships in the Mediterranean more often will have different itineraries with just about every departure.

With that general background in mind, ask yourself the following questions:

- ***Does the itinerary visit the ports that you are most interested in?*** While no cruise is likely to include every port that you want to visit (since you are not designing a custom itinerary), if it stops at the majority of what you consider to be the most desirable ports, then that is a good first step.
- ***How much time is allotted in each port? Is it enough for you to see most of the things that are important***

to you? The answer should be easy enough because the port descriptions that follow later in this book will give you a good idea of what can be done in one day. Of course, if you are going to be taking organized shore excursions, you will know in advance exactly what you are going to be seeing. I mentioned earlier that one day is not nearly enough to see the larger European port cities. In the Mediterranean this includes (but isn't necessarily limited to) Lisbon, Barcelona, Rome, Venice, Athens and Istanbul. If these are embarkation or debarkation cities for your cruise, then you'll have additional time on land to see more. But these cities have problems as day ports of call. Although a few of them have cruise docks close to the attractions, most involve some time getting downtown and back, so you actually have less than a day of sightseeing. Thus, if port-intensive sightseeing is important, avoid itineraries that stop at the above cities as a day port. Again, this is especially true with Rome, where the travel time to and from the port makes it impossible to do even most of the highlights. Do note, however, that quite a few itineraries that visit Venice as a port of call spend an overnight. This allows two or at least parts of two days to sightsee. Such itineraries are, in my opinion, very adequate if you desire to spend more time in Venice.

- ***Even if the number of hours allowed is sufficient, what about the hours of the visit?*** Some ships may spend a significant number of hours in a port but arrive late in the day, leaving little time for sightseeing before attractions close. This is alright if the types of activities you are most interested in aren't restricted to certain hours or if they fit into the time the ship will be in port. Just be sure to factor this into your evaluation.

- ***What is the amount of time at sea versus that spent in port?*** Depending upon the itinerary, a one-week cruise may have anywhere from one day at sea to four days at sea and stop at as few as two ports or as many as four or five. Typically, week-long Mediterranean cruises spend no more than two full days at sea. The relative importance of this will depend upon the primary purpose of your cruise. Many days at sea are fine if you are mostly interested in the cruise experience. However, if you want a port-intensive vacation you will not be well served by a week-long itinerary that spends three or more days at sea.

- ⚓ ***Are non-sightseeing activities such as shopping and watersports as important or more important than sightseeing?*** If so, then look for itineraries that include those ports where these activities are considered to be the best. Again, the port descriptions will help you with this aspect of itinerary selection.

Only you can select the best itinerary for yourself, because only you know your likes and dislikes. If you consider all of the questions above, then you shouldn't have any problem picking out an itinerary that you'll enjoy.

Onboard Activities

Cruise ships are often described as "floating resorts" – and an excellent description it is! Generally speaking, the larger the ship, the more extensive the facilities and the variety of activities offered. However, even today's smaller vessels are likely to have more than enough on the agenda to keep you busy during time spent at sea. So, if you've never cruised and are worried that you'll be bored after a few days, put it out of your mind. You may find that you don't have enough time to do everything you want to do. For some people, of course, the option to just relax and do nothing is an attractive aspect of a cruise. But you can always swim, exercise, walk or jog around the deck, dance the night away, watch a movie, wine and dine until you explode, or be entertained by singers, dancers, comedians, magicians and who knows what else. You'll have the opportunity to learn more about the upcoming ports of call from onboard experts. Perhaps you're feeling lucky. Casinos are a mainstay of every cruise ship and you'll find slot machines as well as table games. The casino is closed when the ship is in port because of local regulations but it comes alive at night when the ship is out on the open sea. Many people cruise to meet new friends. After a few nights, you'll almost certainly get to know your dinner table companions quite well. Something about cruising encourages camaraderie and friendships (and even romances) develop as you travel from port to port. It's up to you. No one is going to force you to take part in the many social get-togethers.

There is always something happening onboard. Every ship publishes a daily calendar that will be brought to your room the night before. It will inform you of scheduled activities from dancing lessons and card games to a dozen other activities, one or more of which is sure to be of interest to you. The calendar also has useful information on procedures for port calls and other events, so read it carefully each day. Entertainment and recreational activities are largely self-explana-

tory. Let's look at those that are unusual or unique to Mediterranean cruising.

Over the years, cruise directors have become more focused on the educational aspects of visiting foreign ports. More time and attention is devoted to making sure that you have the opportunity to learn about your destinations. These travel education programs take two forms. The first is the **port briefing**. Prior to arrival at each port you can attend a session where explanations of local culture and sights are given. (On some ships the talk will be given for all ports at the outset of the cruise.) Although these are generally quite useful and informative, keep in mind that these sessions also have a business purpose – namely, to encourage cruisers to sign up for shore excursions. As you will learn in the *Ports of Call* chapter, that isn't always necessary if you are an independent-minded traveler.

A second educational program that's frequently offered is a **lecture** by one or more natives of the region. Often accompanied by slides or videos, these lectures can be an interesting way to learn more about the local culture. Many cruise lines also offer talks on topics unrelated to the cruise. These can cover anything from personal finance to personal health and fitness and everything in-between. There are even cruises with a theme, with programs based on a particular type of activity, such as a style of music.

There are several activities that I classify as "touring" the ship. Take some time during the early part of the cruise to walk around and explore, deck by deck. This will serve two purposes. First, it will acquaint you with the layout of the ship so you can negotiate it with ease after a short time on board. But perhaps more important is that today's mega-ships are spectacular in design and are often filled with works of art and unusual decorative touches. A careful exploration of your vessel with this in mind can be a most entertaining and eye-opening experience.

A lot of ships offer passengers the opportunity to look behind the scenes at aspects of ship operations. Touring the large and spotless kitchens is a popular experience for most passengers, even if they aren't particularly interested in cooking. Most ships will have a designated time for this tour, so watch your daily program. It tends to be towards the end of the cruise (after you've learned to appreciate all that food, no doubt). At the outset of the cruise many ships will have a tour of the spa to acquaint you with its facilities and services. Although this is a way to drum up business (discounts are often offered for participants who sign up for one of their services) it is, nonetheless, an interesting experience. Bridge tours used to be the most popular tour, but they have become a thing of the past because of security (and insurance) concerns. It is still possible, especially on a

smaller vessel, that selected passengers will be offered this treat. You can make inquiry if there is any chance to do so on your ship.

Options in Port

Unless you have flown across the Atlantic and embarked on a cruise ship to sail the Mediterranean *only* for the undeniable pleasures of the cruise experience, the ports you visit will certainly be one of the most important aspects of your trip. Selecting the itinerary is only the first step in planning your land activities. You also have to decide how you are going to see what you have traveled so far to reach.

There are two basic choices: either use the cruise line's shore excursion program of guided or escorted tours, or head out on your own. As with everything else, there are advantages and disadvantages to each approach depending upon your interests, planning capabilities and spirit of adventure. You may have every reason to take an organized shore excursion in one port and to go on your own in the next port. Some places are more suited to individual exploration than others.

● Organized Shore Excursions

A usually long list of shore excursion options will be provided to you in advance of each port call. When it comes to sightseeing, I don't usually recommend a shore excursion, except in places where it may be better to go on a tour because of specific local conditions. The conditions that may make it wise to take a shore excursion are numerous and varied depending upon the port. The most obvious factors are your safety and security. I wouldn't say that any Mediterranean port is dangerous enough to require a shore excursion rather than independent travel. (In fact, it's doubtful if the cruise lines would call on such a place.) However, cities with higher crime rates (Naples, for example) may give some people pause. If so, a shore excursion might well raise your comfort level. Transportation is another matter. In some ports you won't be able to rent a car or there won't be cars with automatic transmissions. Even more likely is that road conditions may be poor or you don't like driving on mountains, for example. These and other similar considerations aside, shore excursions are very popular with the cruising public for two reasons. The first is convenience. You will be picked up at the ship, taken to all of the places listed in the itinerary with a knowledgeable local guide to explain things, and then be transported back to the ship. You

don't have to do any planning, worry about getting lost, or getting back late and missing the ship's departure. On the other hand, shore excursions do have some limitations. Group travel is slower than individual travel, so you will see less. This becomes even more pronounced if a lengthy lunch stop is planned or if time is allowed for shopping and you don't want to do those things. Also, and perhaps most important, the excursions available may not cover most of the places that you want to see.

Shore excursions are no bargain. Two people using public transportation, renting a car, or even using some taxis can expect to pay less for a day of sightseeing than they would on a shore excursion, even if all of the activities are the same.

Excursions available in each port will be almost identical, regardless of which cruise line you take. The only exception is that some very long excursions may be omitted for those ships spending a limited time in a given port. The reason for the similarities from one line's excursions to another is that it isn't the cruise lines that are operating the tours. All the lines make arrangements with local tour operators and these are usually the same for all or most of the lines coming to a particular port. Although the cruise lines obviously get group rates and claim that they don't get anything out of independently run excursions, I have some difficulty swallowing that. My belief is strongly based on the fact that the cost of just about every excursion I've examined is virtually identical to the price you would pay if you went on your own to a local tour operator and booked the exact same trip. It appears that the cruise lines may be getting something. Even so, booking through the cruise line might still be the better choice in some places, and it will almost always be the most convenient.

Shore excursions generally take one of two forms. The first is the sightseeing variety, which is usually a highlight tour of the port city, although more detailed visits to specific points of interest are also common. Many full-day excursions leave the city and explore the surrounding countryside. These trips frequently allow at least some time for shopping. The other type of excursion is recreation-related. These essentially provide transportation to a site where you can partake in whatever sport or activity you choose and you can do so with the camaraderie of your fellow passengers. Some excursions allow time for both sightseeing and recreation. As indicated before, I generally prefer seeing the sights on my own where possible. However, for recreational and sporting activities, the organized excursion is

much more convenient. Often, for golf and tennis, it is the only way for day-trippers to partake in these activities because the local resorts sometimes make their facilities available only to hotel guests. But they often do allow cruise ship passengers on excursion to be considered guests for the day. Whether on a sightseeing or recreational excursion, lunch may or may not be included, so do check the itinerary. Make certain of the duration of your excursion. You may be able to do a guided shore excursion in the morning, for example, and explore the town on your own in the afternoon. Sometimes you will find it's possible to book two half-day excursions in the same port.

BOOKING SHORE EXCURSIONS

You can find out about available shore excursions for whatever cruise itinerary you've selected in advance. Sometimes they'll send you a brochure about them with your sailing documents. However, the increasingly widespread use of the Internet has had a huge impact on disseminating shore excursion information. Every cruise line will have detailed information on all of their available excursions on their website. During the past several years it has become almost standard practice for the cruise lines to have a system where you can book your shore excursions on-line prior to your cruise. In fact, this applies to all of the American mass-market lines. For those lines that don't have this service (or if you don't have Internet access), you'll have to wait until you board the ship to make reservations. Do so as soon as possible after boarding so that you won't be closed out of an excursion you really want to take. This can be done either at the shore excursion desk or, in most cases, via the ship's interactive closed-circuit TV system. Regardless of whether you book on-line or onboard the ship, tickets will be delivered to your stateroom. All charges for shore excursions will be put on your onboard account. (Some lines will require pre-payment of the shore excursion fees if you book in advance over the Internet – these charges are refundable if you cancel in the time frame established by the cruise line.)

On Your Own

Travel on your own in port is best done where most of the sights are close by or where public transportation is readily available. This will allow you to see exactly what you want to see, to spend more or less time in a given place depending upon how much you are enjoying it, and also often allows you to get a better feel for the local people and customs. In those cases where you have many hours in port, you have the option of returning to the ship to eat or trying some of the local cuisine on shore. Either of those options has a greater appeal to me than being herded as a group to a restaurant chosen by the tour operator (not that they'll take you to a bad place).

One possible disadvantage of going ashore on your own is that if you get lost, or lose track of time, the ship isn't going to wait for you. It will, however, always wait for the rare late-returning excursion. Whenever you venture out on your own (except in those tiny ports where you'll always be within a few minute's walk of the ship), take the telephone number of the ship's port agent. If you are going to be a little late or have any other problem, you can phone ahead and let them know. Do not, however, use this as a means of getting more time in port. It should be used only in a genuine emergency. The telephone numbers will be provided to you, usually in the daily program. If not, be sure to ask for them.

ANOTHER TOURING OPTION

Cruise lines are always looking for ways to enhance their passengers' experiences in the ports of call. Holland America has come up with an interesting concept. They realize that a car provides the greatest flexibility but that many people are hesitant about driving in foreign countries. HAL's answer is the *Signature Collection* of shore excursions. It's a fancy name but a simple program – you sightsee in a private car with a driver and with an English-speaking guide. Although the program is now available in many places around the world where Holland America sails, it was first introduced by HAL in Europe. The major drawback is the expense. Prices start at just over $300 in the Mediterranean and can rise as high as four-digit territory! Tours can accommodate anywhere from two to eight people and last either four or eight hours. This will be tailored to fit various ports of call. Although there is a "standard" itinerary for each port, if it's only your party in the car you can ask that they change the itinerary a little or

a lot. Similar private touring is sometimes available in various ports from other cruise lines, especially Princess. However, to date, Holland America is the only line that has firmly committed to making this a standard option in all ports.

Complete Cruise Tours

Cruise tours are package plans that combine land travel either before or after the cruise – or perhaps both. These types of packages were initially a popular option in Alaska, but they have been greatly expanded throughout Europe in recent years and are now offered in an amazing variety. What's unusual about cruise tours in Europe is that the land portion doesn't necessarily have to be related to or even connected to the cruise portion. For example, cruise tours that can be added to a Mediterranean trip might take you well into Central European countries such as Austria or the Czech Republic. On the other hand, some popular cruise tours that do stay within the Mediterranean region include Spain (typically from Madrid to Barcelona or the reverse) and cruise extensions from Istanbul to other parts of Turkey. The land portion of a cruise tour can vary in length from two or three nights up to about a week. All tours that are offered in conjunction with the cruise you select will be shown in the line's brochure. And there is always the possibility of an extended stay in your embarkation or debarkation city, or both. These, too, are available from the cruse lines. However, always remember to carefully compare the cost of extended stays and cruise packages with the cost of doing it on your own. In general, you will find that the cruise lines aren't offering any bargains. In fact, they are most often overpriced, especially when you compare the charges for these plans to the good value provided by the cruise itself.

A NAUTICAL PRIMER

Those who live and work on the sea have a language of their own. This applies to the navy, commercial shipping and the cruise industry. Although the staff of most cruise ships will usually use words that land-lubbers understand, nautical terms will be heard frequently during the course of your journey. Here's a quick rundown on some of the terms you'll be most likely to encounter either during the planning of your trip or while onboard.

Beam: The width of the ship measured at its widest point (generally mid-ship).

Bow: The front of the ship. (*Fore* indicates towards the bow or near the bow.)

Class: A grouping of ships of the same type. Two or more ships in the same class can also be said to be *sister* ships. It is customary in the cruise line industry to name the class after the first ship built of a particular type. The only major line not following this practice is Holland America. They make up a name for each class of ship in their fleet. Ships in the same class have identical or nearly identical deck plans and facilities. However, the décor can be – and usually is – quite different. Often, ships of a particular class that were built several years after the original one can have significant differences as the cruise lines are always trying to improve things.

Draft (or draught): The depth a ship will be immersed in the water at a given load or capacity. Thus, if a ship's draft is 25 feet but the harbor's water is only 20 feet deep, the ship will have to anchor farther out where the water is deeper.

Gross Registered Tonnage (GRT): This has nothing to do with the weight of the ship. Rather, it's a useful measure of just how big a ship is. The GRT, although listed in tons or tonnes, is the available internal space of the ship.

Knot: A measure of speed equal to about 1.15 miles per hour.

Nautical mile: The equivalent of 1.15 miles on land.

Port: The direction to the left when you are facing the bow. Also refers to that side of the ship.

Starboard: The opposite of port; that is the direction to the right when facing the bow. Also refers to the right side of the ship.

Stern: The rear of the ship. (*Aft* is towards the stern or near the stern.)

Practical Information

Whether you are a first-timer or an experienced sea voyager, this A to Z directory of practical information should help answer many questions and make your cruise a more enjoyable experience.

Accommodations on Land

Certainly one of the best parts of cruising is that, once you unpack your bags in your stateroom, there is no living out of a suitcase. The ship is your hotel, whether it's a short cruise, a week long, or a two-week or longer extravaganza. For the most part, the only time you are likely to stay in a hotel is in the embarkation city and perhaps the debarkation city. If you are arriving at your embarkation point via air, the cruise lines will often arrange a hotel for you as part of your transportation option. Or they may offer multi-night stays before or after the cruise as a way to extend your vacation. Be forewarned that the cruise lines always pick fancy places with fancy prices. Moreover, you could probably book the same hotel at a lower rate than the cruise line will give you! While it's beyond the scope of this book to provide information on accommodations in the embarkation/debarkation cities, here are some suggestions to make your search process easier if you choose to book on your own.

If you want accommodations that are most similar to those you are familiar with in the United States, then properties affiliated with the major American chains are the first place to look. Even here, though, expect some differences. Make your reservations through the American toll-free reservation numbers or their website. Among the biggest American chains in the Mediterranean are Best Western, Choice (Comfort Inn, Quality Inn, etc.), Hilton, Holiday Inn and Sheraton Hotels.

Another possibility is to use some of the better and larger European chain hotels. The quality is usually on a par with their American counterparts and reservations can easily be made from the United States by telephone (with English-speaking reservation agents) or through the Internet. The largest hotel group in Europe is **Accor**. Their hotels go under the brand names (from least to most expensive) Ibis Hotels, Novotel, Mercure Hotels and Sofitel. Their US toll-free number is

☎ (800) 221-4542. For independent hotels, it is best to go through a hotel booking service such as *www.hotelbook.com* or **Utell**, *www.utell.com*, US ☎ (800) 448-8355.

The Internet has opened up new possibilities to locate hotels throughout the world. With a little research, you'll be able to find a local hotel, often at costs significantly below the chain properties. The number of sites is almost endless. I have found that the best way to search for foreign hotels on the web is to go to your favorite search engine and enter the name of the city or country along with the world "hotels." Once you find a place to your liking, the reservation can usually be made online or via e-mail. (Use e-mail if you have any questions.) Most hotels in the Mediterranean region are staffed with at least one person who speaks English. If not, you can still communicate by using one of the many free translation services on the web. I prefer *www.babelfish.altavista.com*.

Climate & When to Go

When to cruise to the Mediterranean will be influenced by three main factors: your availability, the dates on which the cruise you're interested in is offered, and the weather. To some extent, these factors are related. Scan the table below and you'll see that the summer months are the best because they are the driest. They can be quite hot and humid, but not excessively so, especially when you're near the water which moderates the temperature and helps alleviate the effects of humidity. The spring and fall, although pleasant in many places, can often be a little on the chilly side, not what you want for sightseeing or recreation. As a result, many cruise ships transfer to the warmer waters of the Caribbean for the winter. Thus, the typical Mediterranean cruising season is from April through October, with prices being the highest in the summer months. None of the American lines have year-round cruises in the Mediterranean, although some of the European lines do (especially Costa). You should also be aware that some lines don't have ships dedicated to serving the Mediterranean for the entire season. They send the ships to Northern Europe for the short season up there (July and August) and sail in the Mediterranean only from April to June and September and October.

TEMPERATURE CHART				
All temperatures are listed in degrees Fahrenheit, but be aware that local weather conditions will be quoted in Celsius. To convert the temperature from Celsius to Fahrenheit simply multiply the Celsius temperature by 1.8 and then add 32. Rainfall amounts are shown in inches.				
	APRIL High/Low/Rain	JUNE High/Low/Rain	AUGUST High/Low/Rain	OCTOBER High/Low/Rain
Athens	66/52/0.9	83/67/0.3	90/73/0.3	75/60/2.1
Barcelona	62/47/1.9	77/62/1.5	82/68/1.7	70/56/3.8
Dubrovnik	63/50/3.6	77/63/2.0	82/68/2.4	70/55/4.4
Istanbul	60/45/1.7	77/60/1.1	82/66/1.2	68/55/2.6
Lisbon	67/53/2.3	77/60/0.7	82/63/0.2	72/58/2.9
Monte Carlo	63/50/2.5	75/61/1.5	80/66/1.2	70/57/4.4
Naples	64/47/3.0	79/60/1.5	84/64/1.2	71/53/5.2
Odessa	56/44/1.3	76/62/1.9	80/65/1.4	60/48/1.2
Rome	66/50/2.6	82/63/1.3	82/67/1.0	71/55/4.5
Valletta	68/55/1.1	84/67/0.5	90/74/0.1	65/52/3.0
Venice	61/46/2.9	77/60/3.1	80/63/3.1	64/48/3.0

Costs

A logical question to ask is, "How much is this cruise going to cost me?" This section will explore *all* of your potential costs, except airfare, something the brochures sometimes tread on lightly. Several things are important to keep in mind before you scan the prices. Cruise fares always assume double-occupancy in a stateroom. Persons traveling alone will have to pay what two people traveling together would pay, or close to it – outrageous by any standard. On the other hand, a third person in a room (either child or adult) pays a much reduced rate. The costs below are representative of the list price or so-called "brochure" rate, which is equivalent to the rack rate in a hotel. However, before you fall out of your chair, remember that **significant discounts** are almost always available. See further details in the *Discounts* section of this chapter, page 81.

The fares shown below are per night. Although, in general, the per-night cost is somewhat less for longer cruises than for shorter ones,

the difference is not so great as to distort the overall validity of quoting a per-night charge. Within each cruise line the rates from one ship to another usually vary only by a small amount if at all.

- **Inside:** Range from a low of about $245 per person, per night, to a high of about $360 per person, per night.
- **Outside (without balcony):** $275-$410.
- **Outside (with balcony):** $300-$500.
- **Suite:** Prices start at about $400, but see below for more details.

Prices reflect not only the differences from one line to another, but differing rates for peak periods and off-periods. It is always possible to pay more for an upgraded stateroom on a budget line than a lower class of accommodations on a more expensive line. Unless you have a definite preference for one line over another, it is best to compare exact rates for several lines.

Among the major lines, prices from lowest to highest are Carnival and Norwegian, then Royal Caribbean followed by Princess and, finally, Celebrity and Holland America.

With the exception of P&O, mass-market European lines lean toward the lower end of the scale, but comparisons are made more difficult by the fact that their rates will be more affected by fluctuations in the dollar than the American lines. The more upscale lines that were briefly mentioned earlier would almost always be much more expensive, often two or even three times more. Average prices are affected to a great extent by two important factors. The first, as already alluded to, is the variation between low and high seasons. The difference of a week can sometimes mean a large price difference. The second factor is the many different classes of staterooms to choose from in each general category, such as inside or outside. There is almost always a very limited number of staterooms in the lowest price category. Suites have the greatest possible range in price because of the wide variation in size and luxury. On those ships with fewer suites, the price range might be more limited. So, while the minimum suite prices shown don't vary by a wide amount, the maximum suite prices can be as low as $5,000 or less and go up to as much as $15,000. Depending upon which ships are serving Mediterranean routes, not all categories may be available on every line. Which type of accommodation to choose is discussed further in the *Selecting the Right Stateroom For You* section, later in this chapter. The cruise prices shown above also include port charges assessed on each passenger, which are often significant. It does not include various other taxes and fees imposed by different governments. However, compared to

port charges, these are not substantial, typically running from $30-$75 per person for the entire cruise.

- AUTHOR NOTE: While cruise lines generally quote rates with port charges, many discount travel agencies and websites give you a low-ball figure by *excluding* the port charges. Always ask what you are dealing with before you determine a price as good or bad.

Discounts

Seeing is not believing when it comes to prices listed in the promotional brochures. Every cruise line offers a price reduction for booking early. Some form of discounted pricing is always shown in the brochure as well. Most lines offer a straight cash discount, which may begin at around $400 for lower-priced staterooms and rise to well over $1,000 for more expensive accommodations. A smaller number of lines give a percentage off the regular fare, as much as 40% in some instances but typically more in the range of 10% to 20%. And the discount can vary even within the same cruise line, depending upon how far in advance you book. In general, the earlier you do it, the greater the discount. Refer to the individual cruise line brochures or your travel agent for specific cruise line-sponsored discounts. If there's room available, you can sometimes get aboard at a greatly reduced rate if you wait until the last minute. Cruise lines hate to sail with less than a full ship and they will offer ridiculously low prices if space is available. However, I don't recommend this as a regular practice if your heart is set on a particular cruise. If sales are brisk, a last-minute discount may never be offered, and you might not get on the ship at all. Given how high demand has been in recent years, early booking is the wisest strategy.

Travel Agents

Another way to cut costs is to book through a discount cruise travel agent who buys large blocks of staterooms at sharply reduced prices. Newspaper travel sections are filled with advertisements for such agents. To ensure that you are dealing with a reputable company, make sure they are a member of at least one of the following: **CLIA** (Cruise Lines International Association, www.cruising.org), **NACOA** (National Association of Cruise Oriented Agencies, www.nacoaonline.com), or **ASTA** (American Society of Travel Agents, www.astanet.com). There are other reputable travel organizations, but these three are the standards. Consult your local phone directory to find cruise-only travel agents in your area. There are dozens of

nation-wide firms, including many that operate via the Internet. Among the larger national cruise agencies of this type are:

Cruise Compete, ☎ (248) 652-2198, *www.cruisecompete.com*, works a little differently than most other sites. You begin by selecting the cruise that you want and participating travel agencies will e-mail you the price they can offer. You can expect to get three or four "bids" on your request. This is also a good place to check for last-minute sailings as cruises that are "sold out" according to the cruise lines may be available because travel agents have previously bought blocks of rooms that they haven't completely sold.

Cruises of Distinction, ☎ (800) 434-5544. This is a big operation that can offer you competitive prices and often has excellent promotional fares on selected cruises.

Cruise.com, *www.cruise.com.*

Cruises Only.com, ☎ (800) 278-4737, *www.cruisesonly.com.*

National Discount Cruise Co., ☎ (800) 788-8108, *www.nationaldiscountcruise.com*; I have found that this company is rarely undersold. In fact, they're so good you might want to try them last. You may well find that it is the place with the best price.

White Travel Service, ☎ (800) 547-4790.

Package Deals

Package deals that include air sometimes work out to be less expensive than booking the air and cruise sections separately (see the upcoming section on *Flight Arrangements* for further details). But in the world of travel, no pricing system is ever static. Do some research. Price the components of your trip separately and then as part of a package deal and see which is the best price at the time. And don't hesitate to tell a travel agent or supplier of a good price you were quoted elsewhere. They may just come back and beat it.

Repeat Cruisers

Since all of the cruise lines are eager to have your repeat business, it's standard practice for them to offer discounts to travelers who have sailed with them before. These discounts can sometimes be substantial. They usually start at 10% (on top of any other discounts that may apply), but can be much more, especially for those lines that increase the benefit based on the number of cruises you have taken with them. Another way to take advantage of past cruising is to request

such discounts when you book on an affiliated line – that is, a different line than you've cruised in the past but which is owned by the same company (see page 15 for a list of parent companies). All of the industry works this way and the ultimate example is the **Vacation Interchange Privileges** offered by seven lines, all of which are part of Carnival Corporation. For past guests the news seems quite good. But here's the bad news. Popular cruise destinations, especially during peak travel periods, are often excluded from some cruise lines' list of discount-eligible departure dates.

Just remember, with the variety of discounts available being so great, you should *never* have to pay the full fare!

● *Gratuities*

The only other mandatory (or almost mandatory) expense that you will incur is for tips. Although there is no "law" that states you must leave a gratuity, it is common practice – rare, indeed, is the individual who will not do so. You can expect to spend about $100 per person for a week-long cruise.

Except for a few lines (mostly the top-dollar luxury lines), gratuities for ship personnel are not included in the base cruise fare. And, as is the case throughout the travel and leisure industry, tipping is a way of life. Most ship personnel that will be directly serving you (dining room staff, cabin attendants, etc.) do not earn a great salary and tips provide a substantial portion of their income. The question of how much to tip involves your evaluation of the service provided and your own personal preferences and beliefs regarding gratuities.

Cruise line management will always provide written guidelines for tipping, but it is important to remember that these are only guidelines and that you have the final say. Don't be intimidated into giving more than you think is warranted or is above what you can afford. On the other hand, exceptional service is always a good reason to consider tipping above the suggested amounts. Here are some commonly accepted guidelines:

Dining Room Staff: $3-3.50 per day, per person for your waiter, and about half that for his or her assistant. It is recommended that your dining room area head waiter (or captain) be given about $1-2 per day, but in my opinion this can be reduced or omitted unless he does something special for you. Likewise, most cruise lines also suggest tipping the restaurant manager (i.e., the maitre d'), but I don't see the need for that unless he also has performed some special service for you. If you frequently ask advice from the wine steward (when a separate individual handles this chore), he should receive a tip of a dollar per day.

Cabin Attendant: $3-3.50 per person, per day is acceptable. Some sources recommend a small amount for the chief housekeeper but, as above, I don't see the need for that unless he or she has handled a particular problem well for you.

Other Staff: The only other people you might consider tipping are bartenders, cocktail waiters and waitresses, as well as deck hands who help out with the lounge chairs. These individuals are tipped each time you use their services. However, all cruise lines have already included a mandatory gratuity (usually 15%) for drink service, so you should not feel obligated to give anything additional. If you wish, you may give a buck to deck hands when they help you.

No tipping of dining room staff and cabin attendants takes place during the course of the cruise. All gratuities are given at the very end of the voyage. Which is when we get to the tricky part – the actual procedure for handing over the tips. In the old days of cruising (three or four years ago), it was still common for gratuities to be given in cash. Marked envelopes for each staff member were left in your stateroom and you gave the envelope with the cash tips to the appropriate person on the last night of the cruise. This is now becoming obsolete and that's good, because few people felt comfortable with it. It is common now for all gratuities to automatically be charged to your shipboard account in the amount recommended by the cruise line. If that is the amount you want to give, then you don't have to do anything. However, even though your account is charged automatically, it can be changed. You have complete freedom to raise or lower the amount to all personnel or to one or more specific people who have served you. Procedures to do so may vary slightly from one line to another, but most involve going to the information desk (purser) and filling out a form that indicates how you want gratuities to be distributed. Do this on or before the last night of the cruise.

A few lines have other methods of gratuity-giving, such as pooled tips. These are increasingly rare and most likely won't be encountered on any line currently serving the Mediterranean. If you do come across a different gratuity system than those explained here, guidelines and instructions on how these other systems work will be given to all passengers.

There are relatively few lines that include gratuities in the cost of the cruise. And don't fall for the advertisements of "free" tips on some of these lines. It simply isn't true. The price has been raised to reflect this cost – it just relieves you of the burden of having to do it on your own. If you're traveling with a line that does this, there's no need to tip any more. On the other hand, if you feel that a particular crew member's service has been outstanding, show your appreciation by providing a

small additional gratuity. As of the time that this book went to press, none of the mass-market cruise lines included tips. Among the luxury lines category, several, including Radisson Seven Seas already have gratuities factored into their price and no additional tipping is required or expected.

● Onboard Expenses

Other onboard expenses of an optional nature that you may incur are as follows:

Drinks & Snacks

Both alcoholic beverages and soft drinks are (with rare exceptions) on a fee basis. Because the cruise staff will constantly be offering you drinks, this can become quite expensive if you don't keep a tab on it. Most cruise lines offer pre-paid packages for children that include unlimited sodas. I suggest that you head up to the buffet when you get thirsty during the day. The majority of major cruise lines offer free self-service fruit juices all day long. There's always plenty of free food to be found as well, but some lines may charge for things like premium ice cream; likewise for pastries at the patisseries.

Dining

While all of your on-board meals are included in the cruise fare, almost all of the larger new ships (and an increasing number of remodeled older and smaller ones) have one or more upscale alternative restaurants for which an additional fee is usually charged. More will be said about this in the *Dining* section, below.

Personal Expenditures

This includes a wide variety of items, including the spa, beauty salon, onboard shopping, laundry service and so forth. The amount you spend in this category can run from practically nothing to hundreds of dollars. Prices are always available in advance, so when you receive the bill at the end of your cruise, the balance shouldn't come as a shock to you.

● Shore Excursions

The only other significant costs that you will encounter are expenses on shore, whether you travel on your own or on guided excursions. Here, again, the cost will be highly variable, depending upon the number and nature of the tours you take. In general, you should

know the cost of available shore excursions prior to your cruise, even if you wait to book them until you're onboard. Some websites list the cost of excursions. If not, you'll almost certainly be provided with a descriptive price list with your cruise documents. Those touring on their own will have to figure on the cost of a car rental, taxi or public transportation, admissions, and so forth. Lunch might also be an added cost. The practice of cruise lines offering a box lunch seems to have gone the way of the dinosaur, but you can always ask about it. If you can plan your day so that you can be back at the ship for lunch, it can save a lot of money and maybe even time. Of course, this is not always possible.

For a complete discussion on your options for shore excursions, see page 70.

Dining

The dining aspect of a cruise is one of the most important and obvious pleasures of this form of travel. Even if you have never cruised before, I'm sure you've met someone returning from a cruise who can't stop boasting not only about how great the food was, but how much of it there was. If you're on a diet, a cruise isn't the best place to be. But, heck – you only live once. Forget about your diet and enjoy! You can lose the pounds when you come back or maybe even try to shed a few pounds before the cruise in preparation for it. You'll savor wonderfully prepared cuisine, often from renowned chefs, and try delicacies from a wide variety of destinations, including the area in which you're cruising. In the case of a Mediterranean cruise, that's a plus because food from this region is justly world famous.

- **AUTHOR NOTE:** Should a special diet be essential because of health or religious considerations, this should be arranged at the time you book your cruise. Most cruise lines can accommodate various dietary needs.

In the old days of cruising, shipboard dining was pretty straightforward. You had dinner every night in the main dining room while breakfast and lunch could be there or in the buffet. The latter was often somewhat limited in selection. And, of course, there was afternoon tea and the midnight buffet. How things have changed! In addition to the main dining room, almost all of today's ships have at least one alternative restaurant. This can take the form of a bistro, café or other type of specialty restaurant. It is usually open only for dinner, although you will find that the choice for lunch has also expanded greatly. The buffet has been spruced up, too, with more

choices and options. And many buffets are supplemented by specialty areas that feature a particular type of cuisine. There may even be a deli and almost certainly a grill serving hamburgers and hot dogs. Most cruise lines also have a pizzeria (often open 24 hours or close to it). In general, the larger the ship, the more alternative restaurants there will be.

Buffets are especially popular for breakfast when you want to make a quick exit to get on shore. Likewise, if you return from shore for lunch, the buffet will take less of your activity time away from you. Be advised that you will not receive any credit for meals on the ship that you miss because you are in port.

Alternative restaurants may always be casual, or they may be the most formal of the ship's dining venues. It is becoming increasingly common for some new ships (such as Princess' Gem-class or the newer Norwegian Cruise Lines ships) not to have a "main" dining room in the traditional sense. Rather, there is a selection of several different restaurants all included in the basic cruise fare. Unfortunately, along with the increase in choice, it has become almost a universal practice among the cruise lines to charge a fee for at least one alternative restaurant. Should you choose this dining option, plan on paying anywhere from $10 to $40 extra per person for dinner. This may seem like a high amount for an "all-inclusive" vacation, but remember that a dinner like the one you get in these alternative eateries would most likely cost you a minimum of $100 per person in a fine land-based restaurant. On some lines there may be one or more nights when a particular alternative restaurant may not operate. Typically this will be on the night of the Captain's dinner when they want everyone in the main dining room. However, even this seems to be becoming a thing of the past. Choice every night is definitely the wave of the future. Make sure you familiarize yourself with alternative restaurant policies regarding reservations and costs.

The main dining room is always a beautiful place where the cruise line shows off. These days it is extremely rare (outside of the luxury cruise lines) to offer a single-seating dinner – that is, everyone is served at the same time. The general way of doing things is to have **early** and **late seatings**. The early seating commonly begins around 6 pm, although it can be adjusted slightly to fit in with port calls. Late seatings usually commence about 2½ hours after the early seating starts. Some people avoid the early seating for fear that it will be rushed, but I haven't found this to be a significant problem. You will be given a choice of which seating you want at the time you book your cruise and every effort will be made to accommodate your wishes. Don't be afraid to complain if you don't like the table you have been given. It is often possible for the dining room staff to make adjustments. If you have a preference, such as sitting at a small table

as opposed to a large one with many people, also make this known at the time you book.

Dinner in the main room is always a multi-course affair and, although the portions in each course aren't overly large, nobody walks away hungry. In fact, the dining room staff will gladly accommodate requests for additional servings or even two different selections if you can't make up your mind! Don't be shy in asking. If you don't see anything on the menu that you like, make it known. There are usually a couple of items available that aren't listed.

Drinks

While a few lines (the more exclusive and expensive ones) may offer complimentary wine or other alcoholic beverages a few times during the cruise, drinks (including soft drinks) are always at additional cost. Your cruise ship will have a good selection of wines and champagnes and your wine steward (or headwaiter if wine stewards are not utilized on the line you select) will be happy to assist you in making the right choice. The more upscale the line, the better the selection of wine. Spirits of all types are available throughout the day at numerous bars and lounges and, of course, during evening entertainment performances.

Between Meals

Three meals a day doesn't seem to be enough for hungry cruise passengers. Two other standard features that you'll encounter are the **afternoon tea** (usually around 4 pm) and the **midnight buffet**. The former is generally comprised of small sandwiches, pastries and fruits, in addition to a variety of coffees and teas. As is the case with meals, however, there is often a charge for other drinks. The midnight affair is usually heavy on sweets, often sinfully so. Even if a late-night cheesecake isn't for you, do at least look at one of these often beautiful and bountiful displays. See if you can resist taking something. Although the midnight buffet is usually offered every night of the trip, on a week-long cruise there will usually be one night where this becomes an extra-special affair. The chefs show off not only their cooking artistry, but their flair for the showy and dramatic with exquisite food carvings (and ice carvings). At least a few lines are so proud of this feature that they invite passengers in prior to the time you're allowed to eat just to take pictures! It's that impressive. On the other hand, not every line offers the midnight buffet. Princess, for example, uses the buffet as a late-night bistro with waiter service. But don't fret about not being able to see all the exquisite food carv-

ings and other visual delights. These will be featured at other times throughout the cruise.

Regardless of whether the ship you select has a midnight buffet or whether you choose to partake, there's no doubt that there are plenty of other opportunities to eat. Sweets, such as ice cream, are often served out on deck in the afternoon, sometimes even 24 hours a day. And, as alluded to earlier, pizza, hamburgers and hot dogs are another choice. Charging for ice cream isn't common, but I'm aware of at least one line that does impose a fee for "premium" ice cream.

Finally, if you decide that you don't want to go to the dining room or elsewhere to eat, room service is a standard feature on all ships. Hours of operation are always long and 24-hour service is available more often than not.

Disabled Travelers

There has been some controversy in recent years about just how far the cruise lines have to go in order to meet the needs of handicapped travelers. The public relations staffs working for the cruise lines will be quick to point out amenities for the handicapped are provided "voluntarily" (since there are few handicapped access laws required of cruise ships), but the fact of the matter is that the nature of cruising does present some difficulties for the disabled traveler.

Almost all major cruise lines can offer rooms that are suitable for handicapped guests. This is especially true on the larger, more modern vessels. Also, crew members will often go out of their way to assist those with physical limitations. That's the good news. The bad news is that, by their very nature, ships impose a few limitations for the disabled traveler. Even though you can get from one deck to another by elevator, corridors are often narrow and negotiating some areas can be difficult. Because physically challenged persons, to their credit, are traveling more these days, the number of people bringing motorized scooters onboard to help get around has increased. This solution to mobility issues can present safety problems and some lines do impose size and other restrictions on the use of such scooters.

- AUTHOR NOTE: If you require oxygen, make it known to the cruise line in advance. You are required to bring your own oxygen. In general, despite the helpful nature of ship personnel, cruise lines do require that disabled persons be accompanied by someone who can tend to their needs.

Shipboard limitations are not the only problems facing disabled travelers. The greater potential problem is actually in port, when it's time to get on and off the ship. The majority of the more important Mediterranean ports allow most ships to tie up at the dock, thereby eliminating the need to use tenders, which would definitely present a degree of difficulty for almost all physically challenged individuals. However, airport-style walkways where you directly enter a terminal are rare, except at the largest gateway ports. Elsewhere, it is far more common to have to negotiate a gangplank or stairway. Depending upon the nature of the pier, these can often be at fairly steep angles and could be next to impossible for those with more severe disabilities. As a safety precaution, the cruise lines and their captains reserve the option to prohibit physically handicapped passengers from debarking at certain ports if they deem the individual would be at risk of injury.

If you have any questions concerning this subject, contact the cruise line directly and ask specific questions about facilities, including access at ports of call on the cruise you're interested in. Be prepared to explain your level of handicap as this will help cruise line staff to assess your personal situation. Places requiring use of tenders will be so indicated in the chapter on visiting the Mediterranean ports.

Dress (On & Off Ship)

On Board

Attire during the daytime is highly casual and comfortable. How you dress after dinner depends upon what you are going to be doing. If you're going to take in a show or dance the night away, the general practice is to remain dressed as you were for dinner. Otherwise, you can return to your cabin and change into more casual attire. The dress codes for dinner don't vary much from one line to another. In the past it was customary to divide dinner dress into three categories: *formal, informal* and *casual.* But the past few years have seen a blending of informal and casual and more lines are now "officially" listing only two dress categories in their brochures. Regardless, the distinction between informal and casual has become so blurred that for practical purposes there are now only two categories. Let's take a closer look at what each one means.

Formal attire technically means a tuxedo or dark suit for men and a gown for women. However, the key word here is "technically," because on all but the most formal ships there is a big range in what people actually wear on the so-called formal evenings. While a lot of

men do wear tuxedos, they aren't in the majority, especially on the less expensive lines. The dark-suit crowd is always well represented. You will almost also certainly see quite a few men in suits whose color is definitely not dark, along with some in sport jackets. So, it all comes down to how comfortable you will feel if most other men are more dressed up. If that doesn't bother you, then you needn't be concerned about how spiffy you look. If you want to wear a tuxedo but don't have one, the cheapest option is to rent one through the cruise line. Each cruise line works with a tuxedo rental place and they will take care of everything and have your tuxedo waiting for you in your stateroom upon arrival. You can also generally rent onboard if you decide to dress up at the last minute.

Now for the ladies. Gowns of varying styles and elegance are predominant, but there are quite a few women who choose not to be so fancy. Cocktail dresses and fashionable pant suits are becoming more common on formal evenings. Although women may tend to feel more obligated to dress to the occasion than men do, it does seem that the level of formality has been decreasing. Gowns, as well as other attire for women, can often be rented from the same places that provide men's tuxedos.

There are typically two formal nights per week of cruising. These are the Captain's dinner (often the second night of the cruise) and the farewell dinner, which is usually the next-to-the-last night. The Captain's dinner is usually when people dress their best. Keep in mind that there are only two such nights, and even if you intend to follow all the dress guidelines, it will not pay for most people to go out and buy a whole new fancy wardrobe.

Alternative restaurants are often a means of avoiding formal and even informal dress. But remember that the alternative restaurants may not always be open on formal evenings and some of these specialty eateries have formal dress codes all of the time. On some ships you may be limited to the buffet if you want to avoid getting dressed up. Some lines will always have at least one alternative restaurant open where you can dress casually.

Casual attire has two meanings, depending upon the time of day. In the afternoon, anything goes, from cut-off jeans to polo shirts to tank tops and halters. However, casual takes on a somewhat less casual meaning come dinnertime. Pool attire is generally frowned upon in all indoor public areas of the ship. When evening arrives, casual attire translates into what most people would call business casual and what the chic-conscious cruise lines often refer to as *smart casual* or *resort casual*. Not quite anything goes. Specifically, jeans (even "dress" jeans), shorts, halter tops and any kind of beachwear are definite no-nos in the dining room. Sandals and sneakers

are likewise looked down upon, although you can get away with nice walking shoes that are in good condition.

In Port

How you dress when in port depends not only on the weather, but also on your activities. Casual and comfortable is generally the best option. You can always get the forecast for the local weather before leaving the ship. Casual, and even sloppy, attire is usually alright when touring (although some countries tend to frown a bit on some of the excesses of American-style casual dress). More conservative dress is appropriate when visiting churches, mosques or temples. Be respectful. Men will not be allowed to enter a mosque if they are wearing shorts and women must always be modestly dressed. Halter tops, sleeveless blouses and short skirts are frowned upon. Entry is frequently denied to those who are underdressed, even at churches, especially those in smaller towns and conservative areas.

What to Pack

A few words are in order about how much to pack for your cruise. Wise packing can save you time, effort and aggravation. While I usually recommend packing light for a vacation, cruising does represent the one possible exception to this fundamental rule of smart travel. There are two reasons for this. First of all, you will be in one room for a length of time, so you don't have to worry about constantly packing and unpacking. Also, even though the trend has been toward more casual dress, there is still a great deal of dressing up and many people, especially women, will want to make sure that they have a different outfit for each night of the cruise. Heaven forbid that your table-mate might see you in the same outfit more than once!

Wise packing extends beyond what clothes you are going to take on the cruise. So don't forget to pack the following:

- ❑ Sunscreen
- ❑ Insect repellent. Brands containing DEET have been considered the best for years, but recent government studies show that brands with the chemical picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus are just as good. The latter two are considered safer, especially for children.
- ❑ Sunglasses
- ❑ Hat
- ❑ Collapsible umbrella

- ❑ Sweater or light jacket. Depending upon when you go, this can come in handy on land. Even during the summer you should pack some light outerwear because many public areas of cruise ships are kept quite cool.
- ❑ Binoculars
- ❑ Camera and/or camcorder, and plenty of extra film, tapes and battery packs. Although you will be able to purchase film and other needs in port (as well as on board ship), the prices are much higher than at home. Price film developing on your ship as it is less expensive than you might think. All ships now have full digital services as well. I've found that film processing on ships can sometimes be a relative bargain when you factor in that there is no sales tax. If you are going to be snorkeling, scuba diving or otherwise going beneath the surface of the water, bring along an underwater camera. A disposable will do quite nicely.
- ❑ Medications. Making sure that you have all of your medicines with you goes without saying. However, you should also bring copy of your prescription in case you lose your medication. In addition, this will assist in the customs process. Although it is rare to be challenged by customs officials about this, a prescription will help clear things up rapidly.
- ❑ Document**s**. This is another thing that should go without saying, but you won't believe how many people forget to bring the necessary documentation, including tickets! This includes copies of your identification papers (especially the information page of your passport). Keep the copies in a safe place separate from the originals.

Driving/Rental Cars

Many American travelers won't consider driving a rental car in Europe. But if you can drive in the States, then you can scoot all over Europe as well. Roads are generally excellent, although highway systems may be lacking in the less-developed countries. And although the language may be different, all roads in Europe use easily learned and recognizable international symbols. Make sure that you have good maps and a route plan (it's easier to spot signs for specific towns, attractions, etc.) and you'll do fine. As far as the way Europeans drive, don't believe everything you read in guidebooks, which make it seem like life on the roads in Europe is akin to a gladiatorial

contest. It's really not that different than in the United States. However, some driving customs are different. In Italy, for example, drivers will tailgate you on the highways if you're going what they consider to be too slow. Also, most European countries don't follow the rules of passing only on the outside lane, so don't stay in that lane unless you are passing other vehicles. It's unlikely you'll want to drive in any of the larger European cities, which are filled with heavy traffic, narrow streets that are sometimes poorly signed, and have limited parking. But driving between small towns or in the countryside is a great way to spend a port day.

Most major American car rental companies have offices in the popular ports, but it can often be cheaper to use foreign firms. However, I don't recommend renting from a small local operator. If you are going to use a European rental company (or rental agent), choose one from the list below. (That list includes companies which are most likely to have locations in the majority of ports covered in this book.) Make reservations prior to your trip and as far in advance as possible. This not only saves money but will ensure that you have a car waiting for you. This is even more important in smaller cities and towns where the supply of vehicles may be limited.

If you can drive only an automatic transmission car, you might encounter problems. Most smaller town rental agencies will not have automatics. And even where they are available, the cost is much higher than for a manual transmission. This is because fewer people in Europe drive automatics. The cost is made even higher because automatics are almost never available in smaller cars. You often have to upgrade to a roomy luxury vehicle, which you don't really need for a day trip.

Gas prices are much higher in Europe, but this will be minimized by the fact that you generally won't be covering a great deal of territory. Also, many small European cars get great mileage. It is worth mentioning that mileage and speed are given in kilometers per hour. One mile is equivalent to approximately 6/10 of a mile; 100 kph is about 60 mph.

Finally, while the majority of countries in the Mediterranean region honor a valid US driver's license, I recommend that you secure an international driving permit before your trip if you plan to rent a car. They are available at AAA offices and cost $10 (plus a processing fee if you're not an AAA member). Good for one year from the issue date, an IDP does not replace your state-issued license. Rather, it must accompany it.

MAJOR RENTAL COMPANIES

Auto Europe: ☎ (888) 223-5555; *www.autoeurope.com*.

Avis: ☎ (800) 831-2847; *www.avis.com*.

Budget: ☎ (800) 527-0700; *www.budget.com*.

EuropCar (National): ☎ (800) 227-7368; *www.europcar.com*.

Hertz: ☎ (800) 654-3131; *www.hertz.com*.

Kemwel: ☎ (800) 576-1590; *www.kemwel.com.*

Sixt Car Rental: ☎ (800) 800-6000; *www.e-sixt.com*; (Dollar Rent-a-Car is their US travel partner).

Electrical Appliances & Other Technical Tidbits

All cruise ships serving the Mediterranean that have been categorized as "American" will have the same 110-volt system found in the United States and their outlets accept the two-pin plug (including those with a third grounding prong) found on all of your appliances. Most of the "European" lines have 220-volt electrical systems and use the two-round-pin plug that is found throughout most of Europe but even these ships may have dual voltage systems, especially for electric shavers. If you're going to be traveling on a European line, ask if the ship has only a 220-volt system. If it does, you will need a transformer and, probably, an adapter for the plug. Although they may have some of the latter on board, it is best to bring your own.

You should be aware that some electrical appliances are not permitted on board the ship. These are usually appliances that heat, such as irons and hair dryers, because of the risk of fire. Many staterooms provide these items because their safety condition is frequently monitored. If you are the type of traveler who always brings along a host of electronic goodies (other than electric shavers and the like) then, once again, it is a wise idea to check in advance concerning the cruise line's regulations.

Financial Matters

Since shipboard life is cashless, you don't have to carry a lot of money with you while you're at sea. Once in port, however, it's another matter, as your cruise line-issued card won't be recognized on land! Most major credit cards (with the exception of Discover) are accepted in the heavily visited tourist shops and attractions. Small privately owned stores may not accept credit cards. This is especially true once you get away from the main visitor pathways. The same rules apply to travelers checks. When in port, carry only the amount of cash you think you might need for the day. Leave the rest on board in your stateroom safe if there is one, or in the safe deposit facilities provided by the purser's office.

ATMs

Although you can exchange dollars for the currency or currencies you will need during the course of your trip before you leave the United States, it's a better idea to wait until you get to Europe and to use your ATM card to make cash withdrawals in the local currency. Even though you will pay fees for using an ATM that's not part of your bank, the exchange rate is far better than you will get anywhere else. ATMs are just as ubiquitous in Europe as they are here at home. There will almost certainly be one at or near where your ship docks. The airport where you arrive in Europe is also a good place to make an ATM withdrawal. Actually, most cruise ships these days also have an ATM onboard, but be aware that the cash dispensed will be in US dollars which won't be of much help to you on land in Europe. In addition, the fees charged at these ATMs are very high – generally about $5 per transaction, plus whatever your bank may tack on.

Currencies

It is wise to have small amounts of currency for the countries you'll be visiting because you can't charge things like public transportation and other small items. And, although dollars may be acceptable, you'll generally be cheating yourself on the exchange rate if you use them. Let's look at the various foreign currencies you might encounter during the course of a Mediterranean cruise. Keep in mind that the equivalent US dollar values given here were correct as of late May, 2005. Exchange rates fluctuate a great deal, so use this only as a rough guide and always inquire as to the current exchange rate just prior to your departure. The US dollar has been particularly volatile as of late and has been sharply decreasing in value against most European currencies, especially the euro.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE CHART		
Country	***Currency***	***Equal to US $1***
European Union	Euro*	0.79
Bulgaria	Lev	1.55
Croatia	Kuna	5.82
Cyprus	Pound	0.46
Egypt	Pound	5.83
Gibraltar	Pound	0.54
Malta	Lira	0.34
Morocco	Dirham	8.78
Romania	Lei	28,744
Tunisia	Dinar	1.28
Turkey	Lira	1.39
Ukraine	Hryvnia	5.05

*The euro is used in France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

Formalities, Documents & Paperwork

Passports & Visas

You will have to present proper identification papers to the cruise line before you embark. It is your responsibility to make sure that everything is in order, not only for getting into each port but for returning home. Your embarkation will be delayed or possibly even denied if you can't show the cruise line that you have the documents necessary to satisfy government requirements both here and in your European city of arrival and departure.

You will be required to have a valid passport (with an expiration date of at least six months beyond your date of return to the United States). Not only is a passport required, but it is always the best form of identification for just about any purpose while traveling in Europe, including checking into hotels. If you are not already in possession of a passport you should apply as soon as possible and not wait until the last minute. You should begin the procedure for obtaining a passport at least 90 days prior to your departure because it can take from eight to 10 weeks to go through the passport application pro-

cess. For more detailed information, visit *www.travel.state.gov/passport-services*. Many localities throughout the United States have large post offices or county clerk offices that will also accept applications.

Most of the countries you will visit on a Mediterranean cruise will not require that you have a visa for short visits. In all cases the limit for not requiring a visa will be a minimum of 30 days and sometimes longer. If you plan to make a lengthy extension of your cruise vacation in any country (especially if it isn't in the European Union), make sure you verify when visa requirements might kick in. The exceptions (correct at press time but this can change on a moment's notice) include Egypt, Russia, Syria, Turkey, Ukraine and Yugoslavia. Also, if traveling to Libya you need approval from the US Treasury Department. Always confirm visa restrictions at the time of booking. Cruise line personnel usually have up-to-date information on this, but you can be more sure of the answer if you consult the embassy or consular office of the foreign country in question. You can get visas on your own through the embassy or consulate, or you can let the cruise line or private companies that specialize in procuring visas make all the arrangements for you. This is much more convenient, although the charges for doing so may be exorbitant (as much as US $60 per person). Some countries requiring visas make it rather complicated (in addition to expensive). Russia and Ukraine are examples, but at least in the case of Russia there is only one minor port on Mediterranean cruise itineraries and only a handful of readers might be affected by this. Others, such as Turkey, make it very easy. It is usually handled by the cruise line. You pay and they do all the paperwork.

When traveling in a foreign country, it is always best to contact the nearest American embassy or consular office in the event of some legal difficulty, such as a lost passport or infractions of local laws. However, while on a cruise you might first consider getting advice from the ship's purser. If they cannot resolve your problem then it is time to turn elsewhere.

● *Customs*

Customs procedures in most European countries have been streamlined and you can usually get through airport formalities quickly. This is especially so in the western European nations that are part of the European Union. In the Middle East and some areas of eastern Europe, expect more thorough inspections and more paperwork. If you do get stopped, be polite and courteous; any rude behavior on your part is only likely to slow down the process even more.

On many cruises your passport will be collected upon boarding and you won't get it back until the morning of your debarkation. Ship

personnel will handle all Customs formalities as you enter each new country, and Customs officials come on board the ship and will check passports and do whatever else they have to do without your even knowing that it happened. You may not need your passport for day visits on shore excursions, but if you are on your own it might be another story. Ask about this if your passport is collected and you're going to be doing independent shore travel. Regardless, you should always have a copy of your passport identification page as well as other forms of identification when getting off the ship. This includes the ID card issued to you when you check in for your cruise.

There are long and often complicated Customs regulations upon returning to the United States. What is offered here is a simplification that will apply to most people, but if your situation seems to be different then you should get a copy of the publication *Know Before You Go* from the US Customs agency. They'll be glad to mail it to you or you can download it from their website, *www.customs.gov*. In general, each person returning to the United States from Europe receives an exemption of $800. This doesn't mean that you can't bring back more than $800. It simply means that over that amount you will be required to pay a duty (three percent of the value) over the exemption. Families that live together can combine their exemptions so that a husband and wife traveling with their child can exempt a total of $2,400, regardless of who bought what, with a few exceptions. The exclusion also includes specific limitations on certain items. No one can bring in more than 200 cigarettes, 100 cigars or more than a liter of alcohol without paying a duty. There are no exemptions in these categories for minor children, so the couple above, for example, could only bring in duty-free a total of 400 cigarettes. There are many prohibited items such as dangerous goods and illegal substances. Then there are restricted items and this applies mainly to agricultural products and food. There currently aren't any embargoed countries in the Mediterranean – that is, countries from which you cannot import anything. If you think that you have a situation that isn't covered by this explanation, definitely get a copy of the *Know Before You Go* publication.

Duty-Free Shopping

Finally, you should be aware that the "duty free" shopping that may be advertised in some ports has absolutely nothing to do with American Customs duties. It simply refers to the fact that there is no local tax on the items you purchase. All of these are, however, subject to the foregoing regulations and limitations. True "duty free" shopping does apply to all purchases made onboard your ship. So, you won't have to pay any fees on that $25,000 painting that you purchased!

Cruise Documents

Cruise documents is a fancy name for your tickets and other bits and pieces of information that the cruise line will send to you (or to your travel agent). The date when documents are sent varies from one line to another but is, more often than not, anywhere from two weeks to a month prior to your scheduled sailing date. Some lines will, upon request, issue them earlier but this will always be at an additional cost, and a high one at that. There are also hefty fees for reissuing documents in the event you lose them or require a change. The only time you need to consider having documents issued early is if you will be traveling for a week or more prior to your cruise. The cruise lines have been – deliberately, and for reasons I can't fathom – way behind the times when it comes to electronic ticketing. As of press time only Royal Caribbean had implemented a form of this, at least on a limited basis. If it should suddenly become a more common way of doing business, I'm sure your travel agent will be aware of it at the time you make your reservation.

One of the things that will be included in your document package is **luggage tags**. These may have specific information identifying you and your stateroom number or they may simply be color-coded to the deck you're on and you have to write in your name and room number. In either case, be sure they're affixed to your luggage before you turn the bags over to dock personnel. It's a good idea to remove any airline tags before you put on the cruise tags.

The cruise lines also require that you fill out a passenger information form of some kind. This includes information needed by U.S. immigration authorities. Every line now gives you the opportunity to complete these forms on-line or by faxing it back to them. If you can't avail yourself of either of these methods, ask your travel agent or cruise line personnel what procedure should be followed.

Gaming

Other than the Disney Cruise Line, there isn't a cruise ship afloat that doesn't have a casino. And with good reason – passengers enjoy the games and the cruise line enjoys the profit! Depending upon the ship, the onboard casino can range from a very small room to a rather large and elaborate space that is more reminiscent of Las Vegas. Today's biggest ships largely reflect the latter. There are both slot machines and table games. Small denomination slot machines are easy to find, but minimums at the tables will probably be higher than you are used to from Stateside gaming. The majority of on-

board casinos are operated by a well-known gaming company. For example, "Caesars Palace at Sea" is the name given to some ship-board casinos. Regulations prohibit ship casinos from operating when they are docked in port. Once a ship enters international waters, however, the nighttime brings the casino alive. Likewise, if it's a day at sea, then the casino will be open all the time or just about all the time. Minors are not allowed to play but the minimum age is sometimes as low as 18 on a cruise ship as compared to 21 in the United States.

Don't expect good odds on slot machines, which are tighter than any you would find in Las Vegas, Atlantic City, or other domestic gaming destination. On the other hand, table game odds are more akin to their land-based brethren in terms of your chances of winning, so you would be well advised to stick to them if you're serious about winning.

What about "comp" cruises (i.e., free or heavily discounted cruises) for people who gamble a lot? Yes, many cruise lines do offer this. But you would have to guarantee putting down a very large amount of money. If you are interested, contact the cruise line of your choice for details.

Home-to-Ship Transportation

Flight Arrangements

All cruise lines offer the option to include air transportation with your cruise fare. You might even find that some lines show an air-inclusive rate that you would have to subtract as an "air credit" should you book your own transportation. However, this method of pricing is definitely not the general rule, and is never the case on the mass-market lines.

Using the cruise line's air program will certainly be your easiest option. Everything will be taken care of for you and transfers between the airport and your ship at both ends of the cruise will also be included. If you make your own air arrangements, you will almost certainly have to make your way to the ship on your own. Also, if several guests are arriving via a cruise-sponsored air program and the plane is late, the ship's departure may be delayed for a short time in order to accommodate those passengers. If sailing can't be held up any longer, they will make arrangements for you to catch up with the ship. Don't expect that courtesy if you're traveling on your own. (The possibility of that happening can be avoided by planning to arrive in the embarkation port a day early.)

So far it sounds like a better choice to go with the cruise air program, but there are some disadvantages that need to be considered. The air fares offered by cruise lines range from average to very high. I have never seen a cruise line that offers a fare that is lower than what you can get on your own, with the possible exception of one-way fares for those taking trans-Atlantic cruises. Comparison is the key; you'll probably find it relatively easy to get a lower fare for individual travel even after adding in the cost of transferring from the airport to the ship.

What makes it harder to compare prices is that the cruise lines usually don't give you detailed information – such as the airline, departure times, and number of connections – until final documents are issued (usually two to four weeks before your departure). You'll probably want to book your flight long before that if you're going to be doing it on your own. Furthermore, cruise line-sponsored flights are sometimes inconvenient as to both routing and times.

Carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the cruise line's air program as they relate to you and don't let the travel agent or the cruise line bully you into something that you would prefer not to do. These days, all of the cruise lines offer custom air arrangements. That is, you can pick the flight and airline that you want to take. Unfortunately, the extra charge for doing so is often exorbitant.

Making your own air arrangements for a Mediterranean cruise is really quite a simple task. It's just a phone call or a few mouse clicks away. Several of the major airlines that serve many Mediterranean embarkation cities from the United States are listed below. European flag carriers are, of course, another option since all of the major foreign airlines fly into the United States (from New York as well as other big cities coast to coast).

AIRLINES

American Airlines: ☎ (800) 433-7300; *www.aa.com*

Continental: ☎ (800) 523-3273; *www.continental.com*

Delta: ☎ (800) 241-4141; *www.delta.com*

Northwest: ☎ (800) 447-4747; *www.nwa.com*

United: ☎ (800) 241-6522; *www.united.com*

● Getting to Your Ship

I've already touched on the subject of transfers from the airport to your ship. It's easy if the cruise line will be providing the transfers (that is, you book through their air program). Otherwise, the best bet in most places is to take a taxi, which can cost a considerable amount. Public transportation between the airport and cruise ship terminal in all of the embarkation cities for Mediterranean cruises is frequently available in the form of both buses and trains. However, you have to take into consideration whether or not you really want to lug around four pieces of luggage on a train or bus!

If you chose to take part in a pre- or post-cruise tour of the embarkation/debarkation city, all transportation to the ship will be included. Independent travelers will once again have to make their own way, but can minimize inconvenience by choosing a hotel that is relatively close to the cruise ship terminal. However, unlike some port cities in the United States, it is not usual to find hotels in Mediterranean ports that will provide complimentary shuttle service to the dock. Alternatively, if you had been renting a car in the gateway city you should be able to return it close to the cruise ship terminal.

Many cruise lines offer passengers who make their own flight arrangements the option to add on ground transfers to and from the ship. The fee for this service is very high and it will almost always be less expensive to take a taxi. Inquire at the time of your booking if this is available and what the cost will be. Your first priority as an independent traveler is to make sure that you allow enough time to make the transfer without missing your cruise ship's departure time. I cannot emphasize enough that the safest way to do this (and the most relaxing) is to plan to arrive in your embarkation city on the day before your sailing date. Since most flights from the United States will arrive in Europe in the morning, late afternoon departures can usually be made with enough time to spare by arriving on the same day. On the other hand, unlike getting to Florida or Los Angeles for a Caribbean or Mexican Riviera cruise, if your flight is cancelled there aren't a lot of other options available to you to get to the ship on time. Also, arriving a day earlier allows you to compensate for any jet lag before your cruise starts. All in all, it makes sense to spend a little extra and arrive the day before. The only exceptions should be for cruises that depart in the evening. Since most Europe-bound flights arrive in the morning, an evening departure should give you enough time to make it even if there are substantial delays. As a rule of thumb, you should always allow a minimum of eight hours between your flight's scheduled arrival time and your ship's scheduled departure time.

In each of the embarkation/debarkation ports described in the *Ports of Call* chapter, I have given the location of the port as well as more specific information for independent travelers on getting there from the airport and from downtown.

Health & Safety Concerns

No one likes to think about the possibility of becoming ill while on vacation. However, a little advance planning and precaution is necessary because such things do, unfortunately, occur. To ensure a healthy cruise, here are some tips for staying healthy on the ship and while on shore.

Onboard Health

Despite big-time press attention to outbreaks of minor viruses on cruise ships that occur from time to time, cruising is a healthy way to travel. See the sidebar below for more information. As with any place that serves food, there can be occasional instance of food poisoning, but this is usually mild. The greater risks are the annoyances of over-indulging in food and alcohol. This doesn't mean that you won't or shouldn't eat more than you normally would at home or even take an extra drink or two. But don't overdo it. Know your limits.

In Port Health

Health on shore is an entirely different matter. Standards of health and cleanliness in western Europe are on a par with the United States. You shouldn't encounter any unusual health problems. The most common complaint is traveler's diarrhea caused by strange foods and your system's unfamiliarity with the local water. Avoid food from street vendors and drink bottled water or water that you bring from the ship. In eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East you should never drink the local tap water. Avoiding food from street vendors is even more important. Furthermore, limit visits to restaurants in those locations to places recommended by cruise ship personnel.

As of press time, travelers to the Mediterranean weren't required to be inoculated, but ask the cruise line or consult your physician before leaving as things often change. Be aware that some types of inoculations (hepatitis, for example) must be taken many months prior to the time you travel in order to be effective. If you plan to spend an extended period of time on land in less developed areas (i.e., more than cruise line sponsored shore excursions) where you'll have con-

tact with people, secure additional information on what health precautions may be in order.

Here's a rundown on some other common health problems and what to do about them:

- **Sunburn** is always a possibility just about anytime of the year. Always use sunscreen, applied at regular intervals. Don't spend a long time on the beach (or even by the ship's pool) on your first or second day out – it is best to slowly increase the amount of exposure time each day. When touring, it is a good idea to wear light-colored clothes that breathe. Covering up a bit and wearing a hat is always a good idea.
- Stinging and biting **insects** are, of course, quite numerous in these warm areas. If you are going to be hiking in the back-country, wear clothing that covers as much skin as possible. Use of an insect repellent is mandatory in such situations. Mosquitos can be a big nuisance in some areas. The Mediterranean area started having scattered outbreaks of West Nile Virus years before it ever reached the United States. Some mosquitos can also transmit Lyme disease. You aren't going to encounter dangerous insects while casual sightseeing or relaxing on the beach.
- **Poisonous plants** and animals are less of a problem and only those who go hiking or partake in adventurous outdoor activities are even likely to come near a potentially dangerous situation. Other than mundane poison ivy and similar mild irritants, the most common danger is **jellyfish**, which are common throughout the Mediterranean. None of the varieties in this area will be life threatening unless you have an extreme allergic reaction, but the sting can be very painful. Applying vinegar is a good first aid treatment. **Vipers** in Italy constitute the most frequently found variety of poisonous snake but, again, an encounter is remote. While **rabies** has been eliminated in most of Western Europe, it still exists in some less developed countries. Besides North Africa, Greece and Turkey are the two places where this is a potential hazard. As you will find dogs roaming the streets of cities in both of those countries, it is a wise policy to avoid all contact with stray dogs, even if their behavior is friendly.

THOSE NASTY LITTLE VIRUSES

Beginning in the fall of 2002, the news media decided it was time to create a frenzy about a series of outbreaks of the so-called "Norwalk" virus that occurred on cruise ships. What was most disturbing about this and subsequent similar stories was the reporting itself, which made much-ado about nothing. You would have thought that people died or became seriously ill. These are almost always mild illnesses akin to a "24-hour virus," named because the worst of it is over in about that time. Scientists now understand that many of these ailments belong to a virus group termed *novovirus.* Whatever you call it, the whole picture can be put into some meaningful perspective.

The Centers for Disease Control requires that cruise lines report any contagious illness that affects more than four percent of the passengers and crew. Figuring an average of about 3,000 people per cruise, that means that anytime there are about 120 or more cases, it's reported. Then it becomes public information (meaning that the news media gets its hands on it). There are typically less than 50 cruises a year when this happens out of several thousand departures. Even when it does happen, the outbreak is usually limited to fewer than 200 people, or about seven percent of everyone onboard. Your odds of coming down with it on a ship are not any higher than getting it while on land. In reality, these viruses almost always originate on land. They are most common in winter (both on land and on ships). Anytime people are in close quarters, they can spread. It doesn't make news when five percent of the kids in a school or people in an office have a tummy-ache, but let it happen on a cruise ship and... well, you know the rest.

There isn't that much you can do to prevent this except to rely on the good scrubbings that cruise ship personnel give to their vessel after an outbreak. Of course, washing your hands frequently is a good preventative measure. Some ships have begun to place liquid dispensers of mild disinfectant by the buffet in case you forget to wash your hands. The ship's doctor is likely to confine infected passengers to quarters for a couple of days to prevent further spread. While I don't see the need to take any special precautions concerning the cruise portion of your trip beyond what you would do when going to any public place where a lot of people are present, some people are a bit more skittish about these things. If so, the best place for

information on the status of a particular cruise ship is from the government's **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention**. Their website (*www.cdc.gov/travel/cruiseships.htm*) has the latest sanitation inspection report and rating for each ship. You can also call them at ☎ (877) FYI-TRIP.

Safety on Shore

Reasonable precautions should ensure that you have a safe trip. There is no reason to pay less attention to your surroundings just because you're on vacation. In fact, you should be even more alert because you aren't as familiar with what is going on around you. On shore excursions, you shouldn't be exposed to anything of an unusual nature, but it still is a good idea to follow the safety tips discussed below. Although a Mediterranean cruise is not as likely to involve you in physical activities where you could get hurt, there are some recreational activities offered by the cruise lines that can be said to be physical. Know your own limits. If you wouldn't try something at home, don't attempt it while on vacation.

When it comes to **crime**, any discussion of safety from crime must be prefaced by the reminder that reasonable precautions have to be exercised no matter where you are traveling. Tourists are often confused and befuddled and often carry far too much cash or valuables, thus making them good targets for savvy thieves. Don't attract attention to yourself by flashing large sums of cash or by wearing a lot of jewelry. Make sure that cameras and other valuables are firmly held when in use and out of sight to the extent possible when not in use. Be especially wary in crowds of possible pick-pockets and purse snatchers. This applies even if you are on a guided tour sponsored by the cruise line because criminals can easily work their way into your group whenever you're off the bus. If you rent a car, do not leave anything of value visible on the back seat and always be sure to lock your car upon leaving it. In short, the warning about leaving valuables onboard still applies. Take with you only what you need for the day, including money.

Most of your shore time will be during daylight hours. If, however, you are out at night, stick to the main tourist areas. Even during the day it isn't usually a good idea to go wandering around in town away from the visitor attractions where you don't know the territory. There are only a few ports of call where crime is especially troublesome. These will be covered in the individual port descriptions. But even in those places, the general rules should keep you out of trouble.

Ship Security

While it is impossible to be totally safe from crime in any environment, there is little doubt that cruise ships are one of the safest places to be. Few things are as rare as a person being mugged while on board a cruise ship. On the other hand, you never know who is traveling on the ship with you, so common-sense precautions are advisable. Women traveling alone or with another female should be especially wary (as they always should be) about the intentions of men, including (and perhaps especially) crew members. There are, no doubt, some men out there who figure that a woman on a cruise without a male companion is looking for some action. Behave in the same manner as you would at home and you should not have any problems. When it comes to safeguarding your possessions, don't leave cash or other valuables on display in your room. Always use the in-room safe that most ships provide or check them with the purser's office for safekeeping. Also, always be sure that your room is locked upon leaving.

Today, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, many more people are concerned with the quality of ship security as it pertains to protection against terrorism. Most of the cruise lines were paying more attention to this than the airlines were, even before that eventful day, but they have certainly been devoting more attention to it as of late. It is universal practice in the cruise industry to x-ray all baggage that is being checked-in before it is delivered to your cabin. You will also have to go through metal detectors like those at an airport as you enter the cruise ship terminal and each time you get onboard after a port call. Inspection of carry-on luggage may also be done. You will be required to show proper identification before being allowed to embark and, again, each time you return to the ship during the course of your cruise.

Today's cruise ships are technical marvels. They have the most modern and sophisticated navigational and collision avoidance systems. Officers are highly trained and experienced and all crew members receive extensive training in emergency procedures. It is a very remote possibility that you would ever be faced with an emergency situation that would necessitate evacuation of the ship. However, all ships are required by law to conduct a lifeboat drill and all passengers are required to participate. Listen to the instructions carefully and familiarize yourself with safety procedures that are posted in your cabin.

Payments, Cancellations & Refunds

Although payment procedures for your cruise and the process of issuing cruise documents do differ somewhat from one cruise line to another, there are so many similarities that some general guidelines are possible.

Deposits

At the time you book your cruise you will be required to make a deposit. This is usually around $250 per person for a week-long cruise. Shorter trips require less, while longer trips and some of the more expensive lines generally require more. Although it isn't unheard of to have to make a second payment after the deposit but before final payment, it is much more common that your second payment will be the final one for the balance of your fare. This will be due anywhere between 60 and 90 days before your scheduled date of sailing. If you book after the full payment deadline you will, of course, have to pay the full amount at the time of booking. Options are available to pay for your cruise on a loan basis. But, like any loan, this winds up costing a lot more in the final analysis.

Refunds

All cruise lines have a schedule of refunds should you be unable to take the cruise. This also varies according to cruise length but a typical penalty schedule will look something like this:

If You Cancel...	**You Will Forfeit...**
Prior to full payment requirement date	nothing
30-60 days before sailing	your deposit
8-29 days before sailing	half of the total fare
a week or less before sailing	the entire fare

So, if you think there is any possibility that you may have to cancel, or you just don't like to take chances, consider purchasing **trip cancellation insurance**. This can be done through the cruise line, but your travel agent or independent travel insurance companies can often give you the same or better coverage for less money.

Further, what has been said about payments up to now can be applied fairly uniformly to all of the "American" cruise lines. However, European operators sometimes have quite different rules. If you do go on a European carrier, read their brochures and be sure that you fully understand their requirements.

Recreation in Port

Unlike the Caribbean or Mexico, I wouldn't assume that anyone taking a cruise to the Mediterranean is doing so for the primary purpose of participating in recreational activities. History and culture are the big attractions when in these ports. This is not to say, however, that a more active touring style hasn't affected this part of the world, and it doesn't mean soaking up the sun on the beaches of the French Riviera or on the Costa del Sol can't or shouldn't be part of your vacation experience. In fact, some of the cruise lines' shore excursions are simply organized ways to take part in popular outdoor activities. This usually means providing transportation to a popular beach or a fully escorted adventure experience. Here's a very brief rundown on the more popular recreational activities available. Specific port-related information will be provided in the chapter on the individual ports of call.

On Land

Resort areas usually offer golf, tennis and other sports. Certainly, these can be found in large metropolitan areas even if they aren't offered as a shore excursion. Whether any adventurous excursions are offered depends upon what is available nearby. In the big and historical cities you won't likely find activities such as mountain climbing or biking, but these may be an option in more isolated areas. If this is important to you then you should look for an itinerary that visits places where such activities are more likely to be found.

On the Water

In addition to the availability of places to go swimming or just to sun yourself on the beach, there is a whole range of watersports to be found in many Mediterranean resort ports. These include canoeing, Jet Skiing, kayaking, rafting, parasailing, scuba diving, snorkeling, waterskiing and windsurfing. These activities are most likely to be found along Spain's Costa del Sol, the entire French and Italian Rivieras, many of the Greek islands, and the Turquoise Coast of Turkey.

● Spectator Sports

You'll find that many major spectator sports seasons do not coincide with cruise ship schedules. If you are interested in attending a spectator sport, contact the tourist information office in the places you'll be visiting to find out about schedules and availability of tickets.

Shopping

Rare is the traveler that isn't greeted by friends and relatives upon their return from a vacation with the question, "What did you buy?" That seems to be even more the case with cruising, perhaps because of the popularity of shopping in the Caribbean. However, for most people the Mediterranean region will present itself as an equally appealing shopping Mecca. Luxury European goods and fashions are always in demand with visitors, but locally produced handicrafts that vary from one part of the Mediterranean to another will probably top the list of most avid international travelers/shoppers. Suggestions for specific places to shop and items to buy in each port of call will, when appropriate, be detailed in the chapter on port descriptions.

● Recommended Vendors

It's usually not a question of whether or not you'll find something that you like and simply must bring home, but whether the price is good and the quality can be trusted. The answer to that is more complex and merits some further consideration. Quality goods at a fair price can certainly be found. Don't assume, however, that because a particular port is noted for a certain item that the prices will always be reasonable and that the quality is first rate. This isn't so important if you're just buying a colorful tee shirt or little bauble to give to someone. If you like it, fine. That's enough reason to buy it. But when it comes to jewelry or other expensive items, it is another question entirely. If you would not buy these items at home because you can't tell the good stuff from the bad or because you don't know if the price is reasonable, don't buy it here without advice. So, where do you turn to for that advice?

People who have cruised several times will tell you that the cruise staff knows all the best places to get a good buy on the best quality merchandise. Furthermore, many cruise lines will guarantee an item if you buy it at approved locations. All of this is true, to a limited extent. Cruise-recommended shops can be relied on to give you authentic goods of high quality. But this doesn't always mean that the prices are the best. And those cruise line guarantees at specified

stores sound a lot better than they really are. There are a host of limitations (which vary from one cruise line to another) and getting a refund or adjustment can sometimes be a frustrating process. Read the fine print concerning any guarantee very carefully and be sure you understand it before buying something because you assume the cruise line will back it up. One thing is certain: no guarantee covers a change of heart. Once the ship leaves port and you decide that you don't like what you bought after all, forget about getting your money back.

Markets

If you purchase items in a market, then bargaining is an expected part of the system. This is especially the case in countries such as Turkey, and it also applies to Greece and the North African ports of call. Never commit too quickly to a price. Starting to walk away in disinterest when you hear a price that's too high is a good idea. You might well find that the price will suddenly come down. Comparison shop among different vendors. This way you'll have a better idea as to what a reasonable price is. Bargaining is not a general practice in most ports in Spain, Portugal, the French Riviera and Italy. And, while bargaining is fine in the market, it isn't the way things are done in finer shops, regardless of the country. You would be no more welcome bargaining in one of these establishments than you would if you tried that in an upscale establishment in your local mall. Street vendors tend to be more ubiquitous in poorer areas and in popular tourist spots. For example, you are likely to be hounded by vendors in the area of the Colosseum in Rome but won't experience this in the high-priced shopping districts a couple of miles away near the Spanish Steps. Bargaining with street vendors is a universal practice but I must strongly recommend against buying jewelry and other supposed high quality items off the street. Unless you are a true expert in whatever it is you are buying, what you get from a street vendor may be of inferior quality, a copy of something more expensive, or even stolen merchandise.

GOING ONCE...

Going twice... Sold to the little lady in the front row with her hand over her mouth! Ah, the sounds of an auction. Nothing like it to raise the blood pressure a few notches. Auctions at sea, specifically art auctions, have become a standard practice in the cruise industry. It probably started when cruise lines decided to make their vessels floating galleries with wonderful works of art throughout. Although you can't buy what's used as decoration for the

ship, but art auctions present a wide variety of paintings to choose from, often by well-known artists from all over the world. The auctions are conducted by professionals and the attraction is that you can buy yourself a nice piece to hang in your home or hold for investment purposes at prices that are said to be far lower than what you would pay in an art gallery. The cruise line will even crate and ship your purchase to your home. So, should you buy? My advice is that if you know anything about art and want to add to your personal collection, go right ahead. However, if you are a complete novice you might wind up buying something that is overpriced. On the other hand, if you see something you like and must have, and you can afford it, there's nothing wrong with buying, even if it might not be the wisest choice from an investment standpoint. You also might want to attend one of these auctions just for the fun of it. Inspect the art and watch people bid or see the auctioneer begin to sweat when no one is bidding. Best yet, many art auctions at sea provide free champagne to those attending, whether or not you ever make a bid or ante up a penny of your hard earned money!

Staying in Touch

Almost everyone likes to be able to stay in touch with family or maybe even their place of work (for those unfortunate souls who can't separate themselves from their work). Being on a cruise doesn't prevent you from doing that. What was once a complicated and very expensive procedure is now easy. There are a number of ways to reach friends and family back home, or they can contact you. It's still rather expensive, but not as pricey as in the past. The expense isn't because of technology limitations, but because the cruise lines make some extra money on the deal.

Telephone

Every stateroom on every ship of the major lines has its own direct-dial telephone that can be used to call anywhere in the world. Dialing procedures vary from ship to ship, but are simple and well documented in the information guide that will be provided in your room. If you have any questions, just ask for assistance from the ship's operator. Prior to your sailing date (usually when you receive your documents) you will be given a toll-free telephone number that people in

the United States can dial to reach your cruise line's overseas telephone operator. All they then have to do is inform the operator which ship you're on and then the call can be completed. Note that it is the recipient (that is, you) who will be charged for all incoming calls and this may not be any less than if you made the call in the first place. In general, per-minute rates for either in- or-outbound calls on the ship range from $7 to $10.

A less-expensive alternative for calling home is to wait until you are in port. Dial the international access code for the United States (001) and then the access number for your calling or credit card.

And now, the question everyone is asking, "What about my cell phone?" One of the nice things about cruising has been that, for the most part, you're free of the annoyance of the constant ringing and chatter associated with cell phone use. This was especially true in Europe because American cell phones are useless there. However, I am unfortunately obligated to tell you about technological changes that are being implemented as I write this that might just allow your cell phone to be used in Europe while you are onboard ship. No cruise line has announced when the service will become available. When it does come on line, it will no doubt be a money saver. The flip side is that cell phone users will now invade what was previously a sanctuary from the constant chatter.

● Internet/E-Mail

Computer lovers – and who isn't an addicted user these days? – who have never cruised before will be glad to hear that every ship sailing in the Mediterranean has PCs available for passenger use. The negative is that the fees, which vary from one line to another, are generally high and, in some cases, might be termed exorbitant. You can do anything that you would do on your home computer, including surfing the web and sending or receiving e-mail. Ship-board Internet facilities were originally always located in the ship's library. This is still the case in many instances, but an increasing number of ships now have separate Internet facilities, sometimes in the form of an Internet café. Prices will be posted and you will find that the more you use the computer the lower the per-minute rate. Various package plans are available and staff will be able to assist you in determining what best meets your needs and in resolving any problems.

Time Zones

Most of the western Mediterranean is six hours ahead of the Eastern time zone in the United States. So, when it's noon in New York it will

be 6 pm throughout most of this region. The eastern Mediterranean is seven hours later. In most cases, ship time will be adjusted to match local time and you will be notified when to make the change via the daily information program. On cruises that may change zones in the Mediterranean only for a day or two, some lines keep the same time throughout the duration of the cruise. This doesn't usually cause a problem unless you are traveling independently on shore and have to be at a specific location for a tour or other activity at a specific time. Then, you will have to keep track of the difference and make sure you arrive back at your ship at the proper time. Finally, most countries recognize Daylight Savings Time, but the dates when the time change can vary from one country to the next. However, this shouldn't present a problem because just about all Mediterranean cruises will take place during the period of Daylight Savings Time. For your general information and convenience when in ports, here is a rundown on time zones by countries in the Mediterranean region.

Differences from Eastern Time Zone (New York)	
5 hours later	Portugal
6 hours later	Croatia, France, Gibraltar, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia
7 hours later	Bulgaria, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Romania, Turkey and the Ukraine

Traveling with Children

Although children are much more commonly seen on cruises these days than in the past, this is still the type of vacation that appeals more to adults than to the little ones. This is not meant to discourage you from bringing your children along. In fact, most of the mass-market cruise lines actively encourage it so as not to lose the business of couples who won't travel without the kids. Yet, there is a difference in the child-friendliness among the cruise lines and that should be an important consideration in your planning. You know your child's likes and dislikes. Match those with what is available on the ship you're interested in taking to see if this will be a positive experience for your child. In general, the more sophisticated the cruise line, the less child-oriented the ship. Several of the biggest lines do a great job, offering activities for children of all ages. Among the lines regularly sailing in the Mediterranean I would recommend Royal Caribbean and Princess as equally good first choices. While European lines

are beginning to devote more attention to children, they are still somewhat behind where the American lines are in this regard.

There are many aspects of Mediterranean ports that will delight children old enough to appreciate some of the sights, but while on the ship, kids will be able to partake in a wide variety of activities and special children's programs on almost every ship. It is common for cruise ships to have supervised activities all day long and into the evening so their parents can enjoy some fun times by themselves. There are usually grouped by age so that teens won't be bored by activities that are geared to younger children. In fact, teens can almost always participate in special social programs and dances for their age group and usually find these a good way to meet new friends. Any specific questions that you have about facilities and activities on a particular ship should be directed to your intended cruise line before you book.

Zo, It's Your First Time Cruising...

So I stretched the A to Z promise a bit! I don't think I broke any laws in doing that. Getting more serious for a moment, newcomers to cruising will certainly have additional questions compared to experienced travelers but being a rookie cruiser is no cause for concern. You've probably got the impression by now that vacationing on a cruise ship is really like staying at a full-service resort that's on the move. Most things are done for you, including the handling of your baggage to and from your stateroom upon embarkation and debarkation. You'll find that cruises are well organized and efficiently managed, especially given the large number of passengers on today's larger ships. If you have any questions or concerns, just ask a crew member – they're always happy to help. With that in mind, here a few things that first-time cruisers often ask about:

- **Documents:** It is general policy not to issue your cruise tickets) until three or four weeks prior to your embarkation. Consult the cruise brochure to be sure what the timetable is. If you don't receive them within a few days of the latest scheduled time, contact your travel agent (if applicable) or the cruise line. Some lines will agree to send documents early, but usually charge a hefty fee. Along with your tickets, you will receive lots of other goodies, including pre-coded tags for your luggage, more brochures, and shore excursion information.
- **Seasickness:** Motion sickness is not a problem for most people. Since the Mediterranean isn't the open ocean, it isn't as prone to stormy seas. This is especially true dur-

ing the summertime. However, visitors during the shoulder periods of spring and fall may encounter some stormy weather, and severe storms aren't totally unknown in the summer either. Nonetheless, this usually isn't sufficient to materially "rock the boat." Moreover, the contemporary cruise liner is stable enough to provide a comfortable ride even during unsettled weather. The captain will always select a route that avoids the roughest seas. But if you have a history of motion sickness, then an ounce of prevention can be very useful. It is far easier to prevent this malady than to treat it. Nonprescription drugs such as Dramamine and Meclazine (stronger forms require a prescription) are highly effective. Take them several hours before you set sail. If bad weather is anticipated, then you would be well advised to take them beforehand. You should consult your physician about these drugs if you are taking any other medications.

If you should get seasickness symptoms, these same drugs will provide some relief. How much seems to depend upon the degree of illness and the individual. Symptoms can be minimized by focusing on the horizon, which helps you regain your balance. Some people say that placing an ice cube behind the ear may also offer relief. The ship's doctor, in addition to having medications, will certainly have his or her own home remedies which will probably work as well or better.

⚓ **Time Schedules:** Although delays can occur for a variety of reasons, all cruise lines are known for their commitment to punctuality. The greatest possibility of delay is from your port of embarkation (because the ship might be waiting for late arrivals owing to airline delays). At each port of call you will be given with a schedule that tells you when to be back on board. Comply with this schedule, because the ship will not wait long, if at all, for the tardy individual traveler.

⚓ **Identification Card:** Every cruise line today operates with a sophisticated system for keeping track of who is on board and who is not. You will be issued a plastic credit card-like identification card that usually serves three purposes: a room key, your onboard charge card, and a means of indicating your right to get back on board at each port of call. Be sure you have it with you before debarking – not a problem, since you won't be

able to get off the ship without it – along with your other identification documents.

- **Safety:** This is of utmost importance to the ship's crew. Pertinent safety instructions are posted in each stateroom and you should familiarize yourself with all of them. Every cruise will have a lifeboat drill soon after embarking (some might even have it before the ship leaves its gateway port). You are required by law to attend. You should be fully aware of emergency procedures, as should your children. The drill (you don't actually get into the lifeboats) is actually kind of fun and colorful for the first-time cruiser. Your behavior onboard is of prime importance when it comes to safety. Although it looks romantic in the movies, don't sit on the ship's railing or lean over. You never know when the ship might suddenly roll a bit because of the waves. It is also very important that your children be made to understand this. It is rare that people fall overboard, but it can and does happen, almost always because the person had too much to drink and was feeling momentarily invincible! If you see someone fall overboard, try to toss a life preserver to them. After that, or in lieu of it if you are not near a preserver, notify the nearest crew member immediately. And as far as that romantic pose on the bow of the ship is concerned – forget that, too, if the ship is moving. They never tell you in the brochures or in the movies that you'll practically be blown away trying to stand there while underway. In fact, such areas of the ship are usually off-limits to passengers when the ship is underway for that very reason. Wait until you're in port to get that picture for your scrapbook!

Although I've tried to anticipate all of the areas where you might have questions, it isn't always possible to cover everything. If there is something on your mind that hasn't been answered, the best course of action is to call or e-mail the cruise line and ask them. Your travel agent is also likely to know the answer.

Ports of Call & Cruise Sightseeing

This part of the book focuses on the real meat and potatoes of your Mediterranean cruise experience – the varied and wonderful ports of call that make a cruise to this region of the world even more special.

Gateways to the Cruise

Major Ports of Embarkation

Unless you're taking a trans-Atlantic cruise, you'll be flying round-trip to Europe. And even if you do go by ship one way, you'll still have to make your way to or from a port one time. Although some cruises to the Mediterranean start from other places in Europe, such as one of London's ports or Amsterdam, the majority of readers will be taking one that starts and ends at a Mediterranean port. The majority of these cruises (the vast majority if you're going to be traveling one of the "American" mass-market lines) embark from one of five ports – Athens, Barcelona, Lisbon, Rome or Venice. They either return to that same port at the end of the cruise or debark at another of the five. The most important ports of embarkation/debarkation are detailed below. This section doesn't include sightseeing and other pertinent port information since those topics will be covered later. If you are using the cruise line's air program or have opted for their transfer service, then you don't have to consider how to get to the port; the bus will meet you at the airport and drop you off at the cruise ship terminal. I don't recommend that those who make their own flight arrangements buy optional transfers from the cruise line because the prices are usually exorbitant. However, there are some port connections where this is a reasonable or even the best alternative and that will be indicated below where appropriate.

You must be sure to allow enough time from your scheduled arrival at the airport to get to the cruise ship terminal a minimum of two hours before the scheduled sailing time. This is not often a problem, at least in theory, with Mediterranean cruises where flights from the United States generally arrive relatively early in the morning and the ships often embark in late afternoon or during the evening. However, as we all know, airline problems are all too frequent. Therefore, I do suggest arriving at least one day prior to your cruise. Not only will it insure that you literally don't miss the boat, but it is far more relaxing and also allows for some sightseeing or other activities. If you do decide to sail on the same day as your arrival, allow an absolute minimum of six (but eight is better) hours between the scheduled flight arrival and the ship's sailing time. If it is necessary for you to allow an even greater cushion in your port of embarkation, it will be indicated below. Similarly, independent travelers should allow sufficient time to leave the ship and get to the airport if traveling home the same day.

Athens: The spiffy new **Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport** is a far cry from the dreary old airport facility. The incentive was to have it in place before the 2004 Summer Olympic games and, to everyone's surprise, it was done on time. Post-Olympic visitors are reaping the benefits. It's approximately 16 miles east of the city. Travel from there directly to the port on your own is best by taxi, unless you want to make one or more connections via public transportation. The cost of a taxi is about $25 to the city and about $30 to the port. A new subway line connects the airport and downtown should you be spending time in Athens before the cruise. However, it isn't designed for carrying a lot of luggage. Express bus service is also available. The port of Athens is in the rather shabby city of **Piraeus**, a distance of only six miles from downtown Athens. There is bus and taxi service as well as a train. The train is inexpensive and is the fastest method, but it is designed for those commuting between Athens and Piraeus. You'll have to drag your luggage around and fight for space with local passengers who might not appreciate it. On the other hand, if you're traveling at off-peak times it is a possibility. Another problem is that it's quite a hike from the train station to the port. Take a taxi; since the distance isn't great the cost will be reasonable. The port was also refurbished fairly recently and is a nice facility.

Barcelona: The international airport for Barcelona is in **El Prat de Llobregat**, about nine miles from the center city and port area. Trains run half-hourly to Estació Sants and Plaça de Catalunya. The trip takes about 20 minutes and is roughly $3 one-way. This is inexpensive and convenient if you're going to be staying downtown, but either of those train stations would require a short taxi ride if you're connecting directly to the port. Alternatively, you can take the special

airport bus that runs every 15 minutes. The ride takes about 40 minutes and will leave you off at the Plaça de Catalunya, so it doesn't cover the final leg of the trip to the cruise ship terminal. A taxi from the airport directly to your ship will run about $20. Although this is going to be nearly double what the train/bus plus a short taxi ride will cost, it still isn't a bad price and is much easier.

Lisbon: The **Aeroporto de Lisboa** is less than three miles from downtown Lisbon, making it one of the more convenient airports of any major European city. The **AeroBus** is a special express bus that departs from the airport terminal at 20-minute intervals throughout the day for the roughly 30-minute trip (there's plenty of traffic in those three miles) to Cais de Sodre train station. The station is not far from the port, and could even be said to be within walking distance for most people, but that isn't necessarily the case when you have luggage. Therefore, figure on having to supplement the inexpensive bus fare with a short taxi ride. Together, the whole thing will cost under $10. On the other hand, a taxi ride from the airport to the cruise ship terminal should be only around $20, and the extra convenience is probably worth it to most people. The close-in location of the airport is going to become a thing of the past when the new international airport opens some 30 miles from the city. However, this isn't scheduled until 2010.

Rome: Just about all international passengers will arrive in Rome at the **Aeroporto Leonardo da Vinci**. However, everyone in Rome knows it as **Fiumicino**. Although it is some 18 miles from the city center, it offers easy access to the heart of Rome. There is an express train from the airport (it departs directly from the Arrivals hall) that goes to Termini Station. The fare is $10 one way. You can always take a cab from the station if your hotel isn't close by. Trains run about every half-hour and the ride takes 30 minutes. There are also buses, but they are a lot less comfortable than the train. Taxis will run you about $50. But be sure it is an official taxi. They leave from right outside the Arrivals hall. There are also airport shuttles in mini-vans. These are more expensive than the train but cheaper than taxis. The advantage is that they will often take you to your hotel, or at least close to it. So far so good – no big hassle getting to or from the airport into Rome. This is fine if you are going to be spending time in Rome before or after your cruise. If you are going to be sailing on the day of your arrival, however, getting from the airport to Civitavecchia is more of a problem. Not only is it fairly distant, but there aren't any direct connections. You first have to go into Rome and then transfer, something of a pain when you have lots of baggage. There is bus service to the port city of Civitavecchia from the Lepanto station in Rome (on Metro Line A, near the Vatican) every 40 minutes. Train service from Termini runs about every hour and is a better alternative to the bus.

Because of the relative difficulty of getting directly to the cruise port from the airport, Rome is the one major embarkation point where you might consider using the cruise line airport transfer program even if you made independent travel arrangements. Although it will cost more, avoiding the headaches associated with getting to Civitavecchia on your own will be worth it. For those traveling in Italy before or after the cruise, several major international car rental agencies have an office in Civitavecchia. You will almost certainly be allowed to drop the car there, but be sure you understand any possible additional charges associated with doing so. Allow at least nine hours between flight arrival and ship departure times.

Venice: If this is your embarkation city you will find that airport/cruise ship connections are among the most convenient and well-arranged of any port city. **Aeroporto Marco Polo** is about seven miles from Venice so you won't have a long transfer. Taxis are good for the cruise ship terminal because they can get you to the Stazione Maritima, which is near all the cruise ship docks. It is expensive though. Besides taxis there are two ways to get to the city from the airport. It costs $60 to take the fast Alilaguna ferry from the airport to St. Marks Square. The special airport buses are a lot more reasonable. They cost under $5 and the ride takes only 20 minutes. In Venice, they arrive and depart from the Piazzale Roma.

Lesser Ports of Embarkation

The following are less frequently used as ports of embarkation, but you might still find yourself meeting your ship at one of the following:

Istanbul: Atatúrk Airport is relatively close to downtown. The least expensive way to get there is by the Hava airport bus, which for a couple of dollars will take you on the 45-minute ride to Taksim Square. As in the case of some other port cities, the bus drop-off point is within walking distance of the cruise ship terminal. But if you have luggage, it will require a taxi cab to complete the trip. The latter should cost around $5 from Taksim Square. If you're going to be staying in Istanbul for a few days prior to or after the cruise, most of the hotels are in the Taksim Square area so the airport bus alone will suffice in most cases. Because taxis in Istanbul are inexpensive by Western standards, you can consider going from the airport to the cruise ship terminal entirely by cab. The cost for the half-hour trip should run between $10 and $15. Be sure you're taking an officially authorized taxi. Personnel at the airport will be able to assist in this regard.

Genoa/Savona: The **Aeroporto Cristoforo Colombo** is, conveniently, less than four miles from Genoa. However, there is no special airport bus and if you want to travel by public transportation you'll have to take the inexpensive Route 100 bus. It runs every half-hour to and from the Piazza Giuseppe Verdi. It also stops at Stazione Principe, which is closer to the cruise ship terminal but still not that convenient when toting luggage. A taxi, at under $20, is worth the extra cost and will still be a lot cheaper than cruise line transfers. Savona is about 30 miles from Genoa and uses the same airport. However, the only way this will be your port of embarkation or debarkation is if you're sailing on Costa Cruises. Although there are trains from Genoa to Savona, if you're going directly from the airport, a taxi or cruise ship transfer may be more convenient. Keep in mind that if you're arriving in Italy for a cruise from either Genoa or Savona, there's a strong likelihood that your flight will not go to Genoa but to Milan's **Aeroporto Malpensa** because this is where many international flights to Italy arrive. Milan and Genoa are separated by a distance of 90 miles, but to make things worse, the airport is about 30 miles farther. There are trains and special bus services into Milan. This might be alright if you're going to be spending some time in Milan before or after your cruise. If not, then it will be wise to bite the bullet and succumb to the high prices of the cruise line airport transfer program. If flying into Milan and getting to the port independently, allow at least 10 hours between scheduled flight arrival and ship sailing times.

Naples: Although travelers from North America will certainly have to change planes (most likely in Milan or Rome) to get to Naples, at least the transfers between Naples' **Aeroporto Capodichino** and the cruise ship terminal are a breeze. The airport is only five miles away and a special airport bus called **Alibus** runs every 20-60 minutes (depending upon time of day) between the airport and the Piazza Municipio. The latter is just a five-minute walk to the cruise ship terminal. The fare is under $5. Taxis will run you approximately $25. Either way, this is one port where you definitely should not go for cruise line transfers.

Monte Carlo: Only a few of the luxury lines with small ships use Monte Carlo as a port of embarkation and debarkation. Therefore, I won't go into a lot of detail for this more complicated port when it comes to transfers. The nearest major airport is Nice's **Côte d'Azur Airport**. Buses from the airport can take you to Monte Carlo, as can taxis, but they are very expensive. The problem here is that flying into Nice from the United States can be more difficult to plan and will require one or two changes en route. The nearest really big airport is **Marseilles-Provence Airport** in Marseilles. However, that is a hike!

As a result of all this, Monte Carlo might be one of those ports where you will be better off using the cruise line's air program that includes the transfers. On the other hand, if you are spending some time on the Riviera before or after the cruise, dropping off the car in Nice or Monte Carlo can avoid most of the port-transfer headaches. Same day independent travelers arriving in Marseilles should allow 10 hours between scheduled flight arrival and ship departure time.

Onboard Sightseeing

There is no denying that standing on deck (or on your private balcony) and watching the beautiful blue waters of the Mediterranean is a stunning sight. But, unless you're the extra-romantic type, the appeal of this kind of sightseeing will probably wear off quickly. The fact is that, unlike Alaska and some other places, you won't be doing a lot of what can be termed "scenic cruising" during your Mediterranean voyage. However, there are times when you should be out on deck to see something of special interest. Many Mediterranean ports are situated along beautiful bays or particularly scenic stretches of the coast. Thus, your arrival or departure from the various ports can often provide stunning vistas, assuming that the ship gets there and leaves in the daylight, which is the case on most itineraries. I'll point out those ports which fall into this category and, of course, your daily cruise program should also mention where the viewing will be especially good.

Among the best areas of Mediterranean scenic cruising are:

- Strait of Gibraltar
- Strait of Bonifacio (separating Corsica and Sardinia)
- The volcanic island of Stromboli (near Sicily) and the other small islands of the Eolian group. A handful of cruises call on Lipari, one of the seven islands. It has a maze of winding streets and a medieval castle in its main town, also named Lipari. The castle is located in an archaeological park complex and has a small museum. A guided tour of the island reveals dramatic windswept cliffs and villages.
- Strait of Messina between Sicily and the Italian mainland
- The islands along the Dalmatian Coast between Split and Dubrovnik

- ⚓ Almost all cruising between mainland Greek ports
- ⚓ The Dardanelles and the Bosporus
- ⚓ Along the Turquoise Coast of southern Turkey

Which Ports Are Included?

There are more than 170 possible ports of call in the Mediterranean and surrounding areas that are sometimes part of a Mediterranean cruise itinerary. To fully cover all of them would make a book of encyclopedic proportions. Perhaps even more important is that the majority of these ports are visited only by a small number of cruises. These are also almost exclusively the domain of the smaller luxury class vessels and some of the foreign lines. The ports that I'll be covering have been divided into two sections. The first explores the most visited ports – those that will be seen by the overwhelming number of cruise visitors from North America. A short summary of many of the remaining ports follows this section.

ISRAEL & MIDDLE EAST ISSUES

Mediterranean ports of call have undergone considerable changes over the past several years. As recently as the summer of 2000, it was common to find many eastern Mediterranean itineraries from the "American" lines going to Israel and Egypt and other itineraries visiting a number of North African ports. This began to be cut back in the 2001 cruising season due to the continuing troubles posed by the outbreak of the second Palestinian *intifada*. This is understandable, since the cruise lines have always been quick to react to possible safety issues in the ports they visit. After the events of September 11, 2001, Middle Eastern and almost all North African ports of call were made "untouchable" by the major cruise lines. This situation has evolved over the last couple of years. Egypt is back on the list of ports called on by American lines (most of the European lines never cut it out entirely), while Turkey is also back. In fact, while it was hard to find an American line with a truly Eastern Mediterranean itinerary in 2003, there is now a wide choice. North African ports on the western side of the Mediterranean are also commonly visited. Even Libya now has a couple of ports that see cruise ships calling on it, although it has yet to be embraced by any American line. Lebanon sees quite a few ships calling, but recent troubles

could get worse and there could be cutbacks. Syria is visited only by some of the European lines.

There's no doubt that the crown jewel of the Eastern Mediterranean used to be the Holy Land, that is, Israel. This is natural because of the inherent drawing power of Jerusalem with its appeal to followers of three major faiths. But this hasn't been on the charts for several years now, either by the American or European lines. So, you will not presently see **Jerusalem** (and its port of **Ashdod**), **Haifa** or **Tel Aviv** as a port of call. Given the conservative nature of the cruise lines regarding safety (a good thing), resumptions of Israeli port calls isn't likely in the near future, even if things begin to improve. Certainly no port calls are scheduled for 2006 and I'd be surprised if any were for 2007. Beyond that, it will be time for a new edition of this book. If, on the other hand, there are dramatic improvements and one or more cruise lines makes a quick decision to resume Holy Land cruises, then grab yourself a good guidebook on Israel and plan your day in port!

Tourism Information

The information in this chapter is designed to help you decide which ports you most want to visit and to get the most out of your available shore time. But that's only a start. Once you've made your selection, you'll probably want to get even more information about the places you're going to visit and this should begin well before your trip. A good place to start is with the national tourist offices of the countries your cruise ship will call on. Here's a list of their US addresses, telephone numbers and websites.

National Tourism Offices in the US

Bulgaria
www.mtt.govrn.bg/tour-info
Bulgarian Tourist Information Center
41 East 42nd Street, Suite 508
New York, NY 10017
☎ (212) 573-5530

Croatia
www.htz.hr
Croatian National Tourist Office
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4003
New York, NY 10118
☎ (800) 829-4416

Cyprus
www.cyprustourism.org
Cyprus Tourism
13 East 40th Street
New York, NY 10016
☎ (212) 683-5290

Egypt
www.egypttourism.org
Egyptian Tourist Authority
630 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1706
New York, NY 10111
☎ (212) 332-2570

Egyptian Tourist Authority
8333 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 215
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
☎ (323) 653-8815

France
www.francetourism.com
French Govt Tourist Office
444 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022
☎ (212) 838-8310

French Govt Tourist Office
9454 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 715
Beverly Hills, CA 90212
☎ (310) 276-2835

Gibraltar
www.gibraltar.gi/tourism
No tourism office in the United States

Greece
www.gnto.gr
Greek National Tourist Office
645 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10022
☎ (212) 421-5777

Italy
www.enit.it
Italian Govt Travel Office
630 Fifth Avenue, Suite 15651
New York, NY 10111
☎ (212) 245-5095

Italian Govt Travel Office
2400 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 550
Los Angeles, CA 90025
☎ (310) 820-1898

Malta
www.visitmalta.com
Malta Government Travel Office
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4412
New York, NY 10118
☎ (800) 753-9696

Monaco
www.monacotourism.com
Monaco Tourism
565 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10017
☎ (212) 286-3330

Morocco
www.tourism-in-morocco.com
No tourism office in the United States

Portugal
www.icep.pt
ICEP-Portuguese Tourist Office
590 Fifth Avenue, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10036
☎ (212) 719-3985

Romania
Romanian Government Travel Office
14 East 38th Street
New York, NY 10016
☎ (212) 545-8484

Spain
www.okspain.org
Tourist Office of Spain
666 Fifth Avenue, 35th Floor
New York, NY 10103
☎ (212) 265-8822

Tourist Office of Spain
8383 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 960
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
☎ (323) 658-7188

Tunisia
www.tourismtunisia.com
No tourism office in the United States

Turkey
www.turkey.org
Turkish Tourist Office
821 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
☎ (212) 687-2194

Ukraine
www.ukremb.com
No tourism office in the United States

Getting more detailed information on specific ports can be done in a number of ways. You could read detailed travel guides on each destination. You should also plan on contacting the local tourist offices in the ports of call. While you might be able to contact them from the United States, this can be difficult (time differences, telephone charges and possible language problems) if the city doesn't have its own website. Thus, you may wish to visit the tourist office first thing upon your arrival. The tourist office most convenient to the cruise ship dock will be noted for each port of call (where one exists, since many small towns don't have such offices). Should you want to call them, I've included the local phone number. When the phone number is preceded by two to four digits in parentheses, that portion of the number is the city code, the equivalent of US area codes. You need not dial it if you are calling locally, but should include it if you are calling from outside the local calling area in the same country. The usefulness of tourist offices varies a great deal from one locality to another. The offices in western Europe are generally the best, with plenty of information and a trained staff with at least one English-speaking person. Offices in North Africa and eastern Europe will usually have less printed information available and may or may not have an English-speaking staff member. In some places, notably the Ukraine, you might not only find no English spoken, but the attitude of the staff might be less than pleasant. On the bright side, the situation in eastern Europe has improved quite a bit over the last several years and is likely to continue getting better.

How I Present Port Information

To help you plan your itinerary and your day in each port, information is broken down into the categories below.

● Arrival

This section indicates whether ships at this port will be **docked** (that is, tied up at the pier and you walk off the ship) or **tendered** (ship drops anchor in the harbor and you take a tender/launch to the pier). The factors contributing to this are the length (and beam to a lesser extent) of the ship, the draft (see the *Nautical Primer* sidebar, page 75) and how many ships are in port at the time you arrive. The majority of ports in the "most popular" category can usually handle three or more ships at the same time. Given the sailing schedules in the Mediterranean, having to tender because of traffic should be something that you rarely, if ever, encounter. Some ports have just a dock or quay, while other ports have terminals with facilities for shopping, making telephone calls back home, ATMs, and so forth. I will note the presence of terminal facilities in each port description. The location of the port relative to the city will also be given, along with the best way to get into town if you're exploring on your own.

● Tourism Information Office

The location of the most convenient office to the dock will be given, along with the telephone number. If you wish to call the tourist office from another country you must first dial the international access code (011 from the United States); the country code (a list of country codes is in your telephone directory); the city code (a one- to four-digit number that is equivalent to our area codes); and the local number. If you are calling from another location in the same country (e.g., from Rome to Naples), you must dial the city code first. However, if the first digit of the city code is a zero, you omit it. In a given location, you need only dial the local number. In this book all city codes – where applicable since not all countries use them – are shown in parentheses before the local telephone number.

● Getting Around

This will give you an idea of what the public transportation system is like, the location of most attractions and how to approach your travels on shore. It will give an indication of whether this is a likely port in which to rent a car or whether or not a shore excursion is the most desirable way to get around.

● The One-Day Sightseeing Tour

I provide a suggested one-day itinerary, since that is how much time you'll usually have. For cities that might be ports of embarkation, or

where you may have additional time, there will be another section added called *Additional Sights*. A third section, *Outside the City* (or something similar), might also appear for ports where many of the best sights are not in the port city itself. More about sightseeing appears below. Note that the level of detail is based not only on the number of sights that a port has, but on its relative importance as a port of call.

- AUTHOR NOTE: The times shown for when attractions are open reflect the summer season. While this doesn't always differ a great deal in the Mediterranean countries, it can in some places. In some instances the hours may be shorter, but in others (notably Greece, where it's very hot) they may be longer if you are traveling in the shoulder periods of April, May, September and October.

Shopping

This tells you of any items that are unique to this port or special in some way, as well as where you can find them.

Sports & Recreation

This section will cover the various recreational opportunities and their locations.

Planning Your Day

Here are some additional important facts to keep in mind when planning your day. First, the number of hours you have is *not* equal to the hours of the port call. For instance, a typical port call as shown in the cruise line brochure might be from 8 am until 6 pm. But you often won't be able to get off the ship until about an hour after the scheduled arrival. You must also be back on board from a half-hour to an hour before departure, depending upon the ship. Thus, in this particular case your maximum available sightseeing time is from 9 am until 5 pm.

- AUTHOR NOTE: It is a good rule of thumb to begin your calculation of available port time by subtracting 1½ to two hours from the ship itinerary hours to determine how much time you have.

Second, the tours described here assume you are not planning other types of activities. If you are like most people, however, and do want to spend at least some time at the beach or shopping, then you will have to subtract that from the available sightseeing time. And, of course, most people will want to allocate some time for lunch. Then again, with all of the eating you'll likely be doing on board, skipping lunch or just having a quick snack may be a good idea for those who intend to do some serious sightseeing.

MONDAYS & OTHER BLAH DAYS

It was the '60s musical group the *The Mamas & The Papas* who once sang, "Monday, Monday...can't trust that day." You may be reminded of this as you read through the sightseeing sections on the various ports of call and find that many attractions are closed on one or more days. In Europe, Monday is a particularly "bad" day in this regard, although it varies quite a bit from one place to another. The reason I mention this is because the cruise lines never take it into account when planning their itineraries. If they call on Port Example on Monday and everything is closed, so be it! They're not going to adjust their schedules based on your little problem. So it's up to you to check and see if any major attractions will be closed on the day you are scheduled to be in port. If there are, and these closings make the port less worthwhile to you, then try to pick a different sailing date or a different cruise. You will probably find that there is always going to be something closed, but you should try to pick out a cruise where the problem is minimal.

● *Prices*

Since prices for attractions (given in US dollars) seem to change frequently, only a price range indicator will be shown. If there is no indicator, then the attraction is free.

Adult Price Levels	
$	Less than $5
$$	$5-9
$$$	$10-20
$$$$	More than $20

Although I will frequently mention the availability of shore excursions, I have not included pricing information. The cost of an excursion depends upon the length of the trip, the types of activities, and whether or not it includes lunch. Rare, indeed, is the shore excursion that will cost less than $25 per adult. If it does, then it is probably providing only transportation to a place

where you'll be on your own regarding other costs, including admissions and fees for activities. Regular shore excursions that include these items generally run from about $305 to $120. In some instances, rates can even be higher. Admissions to museums and other attractions that are part of the shore excursion itinerary are, however, included in the price.

The Major Ports

Ajaccio (Corsica), France

The fourth-largest island in the Mediterranean may be a part of France, but a visit here is quite different from visiting the French Riviera or any other part of France. The population is not of French extraction. They are culturally more akin to Italians, but it would be equally incorrect to say they're like their Italian neighbors. Many Corsicans have long wished to have their own independent state, and there is still occasional agitation for this. Fortunately, violence is a rare thing and it has never been directed at visitors. However, be aware of Corsican cultural sensitivities and don't say anything that indicates you think they are French!

Corsica is a mountainous island that measures about a 100 miles from north to south (not counting a narrow point in the northeast that extends for another 20 miles) and averages 40 miles wide. Thus, while the majority of cruise ships with Corsica in their itineraries call upon Ajaccio, it is possible to explore other parts of the island. (Other ports of call that are described separately include Calvi, Bonifacio, Porto-Vecchio and Bastia.)

Arrival: The dock in Ajaccio can accommodate ships up to a length of 650 feet, meaning that the majority of visitors will have to tender onto shore. Once arriving at the dock, however, you'll find yourself only a few hundred feet from the town's center.

Tourism Information Office: 1 Place Foch, in the Hôtel de Ville (the town hall), ☎ (04) 9551 5303.

Getting Around: In Ajaccio it is easy to get to all of the attractions on foot since most of the main points of interest are within a quarter-mile from north to south. Taxis are available for those who don't like to walk. Most taxi drivers will gladly take you on tours into the interior and this is often less expensive than organized shore excursions. However, there's a wide variety of available excursions that should appeal to just about every taste. Renting a car is an expensive possi-

bility, and finding an automatic is a virtual impossibility. Furthermore, the roads are narrow and winding and those not experienced with mountain driving will be better off letting someone else take the wheel.

One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Ajaccio has several places of interest, but it won't take you more than a half-day to see them, so you have the option of seeing at least part of the island's interior before or after your town visit. If you're off the ship in the morning, try to visit the colorful and aromatic **food market** in the Place Campinchi. *Daily except Monday.* Ajaccio is most widely known as the birthplace of Napoleon and you won't lose sight of that when you're in town. In addition to many statues of Nappy, the local hero, you'll find the **Maison Bonaparte**, *rue St. Charles; Monday 2-5pm, Tuesday-Sunday, 10am-noon and 2-5pm; $$.* The modest structure is the house where he was born and raised. **Salon Napoléonien** is a good museum about the emperor and is located in the town hall (Hôtel de Ville). The grandoise salon is notable for its many large portraits of the entire Bonaparte family. *Place Maréchal-Foch; Monday-Friday, 9am-noon and 2:30-5:30pm; $.* The **Musée Fesch** has a lot more stuff on Napoleon and some other topics, including a decent art collection. *50 rue Fesch; open daily except Tuesday, 9:30am-noon and 3-6pm; $$.* At the same location is the **Chapelle Iméprial** (Imperial Chapel) built by Napoleon III in 1857. He had intended that all the Bonapartes be laid to rest there, but the main man himself is entombed at the Invalides in Paris. *Hours are somewhat erratic but usually open the same times as the museum during July and August; $.* The 16th-century baroque **Cathedral** is worth spending a few minutes exploring, *Rue F. Conti*. At the southern end of town is the imposing **Citadelle**, just south of the port. Although it isn't open to the public, the massive fortress is impressive on the outside. Finally, the **Musée a Bandera** is dedicated to Corsican military history. *1 rue Général Lévie; open daily except Sunday, 9am-noon and 2-6pm; $.*

The most famous Napoleon statue in town is at **Place d'Austerlitz**. It's a replica of the statue outside the Palace des Invalides in Paris. In the Place des Palmiers, Napoleon's statue is flanked by four heroic lions. Nearby is another monument to the emperor, this one on horseback accompanied by his four brothers. Keep in mind that Napoleon is still very much revered throughout France and in no place more so than on Corsica. Talk about him positively if you want to befriend the locals. Also, take some time to just wander around the streets of Ajaccio and experience its laid-back lifestyle. In many ways, things haven't changed much here in the past several hundred years.

Exploring Farther Afield: Exploring the countryside of Corsica is a great way to spend either a half- or full day. One way to do so is by taking **boat** trips along the coast, which visit small islands and pass lovely coastal scenery, nature reserves and chalk cliffs. Although there are higher mountain peaks in the Mediterranean, of all the islands of the region, Corsica is the most mountainous. The highest point is around 8,800 feet.

Much of the interior consists of the **Corsica Regional Natural Park** and, besides mountain scenery (and winter skiing) and views of the sea, the park offers some stunning gorges. The most famous of these natural chasms is the **Prunelli Gorge**. On the way to Prunelli, be sure to stop for a view of beautiful **Tolla Lake**. The **Spelunca Gorge** is also quite scenic. But some of Corsica's best scenery is nearby in the tiny coastal town of **Porto**, where you'll see a series of red granite outcroppings known as the **Calanches of Piana**. The rocks resemble some of the weird formations common to the American southwest. Corsica is a wine-making region and most day tours will stop at one of the local wineries. If you're traveling on your own, they are more than happy to welcome individual visitors.

***Shopping*:** This is not a shopper's paradise, but Corsican handicrafts can be a nice souvenir. You can try the **Paese Nostru** on Passage Guinguetta for the best selection and reasonable prices.

Sports & Recreation: Outdoor activities appeal to the rugged individual and include all manner of watersports, including canoeing, kayaking and rafting. The swift mountain rivers of Corsica provide the most popular venues. For the less adventurous, sailing is a good option.

Alexandria, Egypt

Alexandria is relatively young by Egyptian standards, having been founded in 332 BC by Alexander the Great. It quickly became both an important port and a seat of learning. The lighthouse was one of the ancient wonders of the world and its half-million-volume library was the world's greatest for many centuries. Although new archeological discoveries continue to be made (often a result of new construction projects unearthing ruins), today's Alexandria has little evidence of its status as one of the great cities of the ancient world. Yet, it is a fascinating place to visit. Covering a narrow band from the Mediterranean inland, Alexandria parallels the sea for more than a dozen miles.

***Arrival*:** The recently completed facilities at El-Dikheilah terminal provide four berths, so any ship currently calling on Alexandria is now able to dock. As it is almost two miles into the center of town, taxis are the best way to get from the port if you are traveling independently, unless the cruise line is providing shuttle service.

Tourism Information Office: Midan Saad Zaghloul, ☎ 485-1556.

Getting Around: Alexandria has a well-developed system of trams that reach most of the attractions that aren't in walking distance. Sign up for shore excursions within Alexandria only if you feel uncomfortable being on your own in an Arab country.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: The **Al-Corniche** is a beautiful waterfront promenade that arcs its way along the Eastern Harbor. Alexandria's finest hotels and shops are roughly in the middle section, as is a fine beach. The **market** (*souq*) is a few blocks inland. Two lovely mosques are within a stone's throw of the market; **Terbana Mosque** is especially nice. Back on the waterfront, you can reach **Fort Qaitbey** via Tram #15. Built over the foundations of the ancient lighthouse by the Mamluk Sultan, it was damaged in the 19th century but is still quite a sight. The same tram can take you to the **Necropolis of Antushi**, *Sharia Ras At-tin*, in Alexandria's northwest section. Although not on a par with the "cities of the dead" found farther down the Nile, it is still quite interesting, especially if you won't be traveling further in Egypt. From the city center, Tram #16 takes you south to the **Catacombs of Kom ash-Shuqqafa**, which is perhaps the most interesting place to visit in all of Alexandria. Constructed in the second century AD, the site held the remains of more than two dozen wealthy Egyptians. You enter this vast underground complex via a spiral staircase. Many exquisitely decorated halls are off the central rotunda. The highly elaborate artwork and architecture is a blend of Egyptian, Greek and Roman styles. *Open daily, 9am-4pm; $$.* Nearby is the 90-plus-foot high **Pompey's Pillar**, a massive column that was misnamed by European military conquerors who thought it was built by the Roman general. Returning towards the city center, east of the tram line is the **Roman Amphitheater**, or *Kom al-Dikka*. Discovered about 40 years ago, this theater is comprised of more than a dozen terraces built of white marble. It must have been stunning in the ancient sunlight because it still looks impressive centuries later. *Sharia Yousel, off Midan Gomhuriyya; open daily, 9am-4pm; $.* Less than a mile to the northeast is Alexandria's finest museum, the **Graeco-Roman Museum**. The large collection of more than 40,000 artifacts covers Alexandria's ancient period in fine form. *5 Al-Mathaf-ar-Romani; open daily, 9am-4pm (closed 11:30am-1:30pm on Fridays); $$.* Back along the Corniche is the **Montazah Palace**. Once a royal summer retreat, it is now reserved for the Presi-

dent of Egypt and his guests. Visitors may go into the beautiful gardens where they can get a better look at the palatial structure. Bus route 260 will take you there.

The above should take up just about all of your port time in Alexandria. However, you might want to consider one or both of the following as alternatives to some of the other places. The new **Bibliotheca Alexandrina** opened in 2002 is located east of downtown and was inspired by the ancient library of Alexandria, although it is different architecturally. This massive modern building has many curved walls and a huge rotunda. The walls are covered with symbols of many languages, both ancient and modern. It also contains a small antiquities museum as well as a planetarium. The latter will amuse children more than the rest of the place. Although the library currently houses only several hundred thousand works, it is designed to eventually have a collection of more than eight million books, which will make it one of the great repositories of knowledge in the entire world. *Corniche al-Bahr; open Sunday-Thursday, 11am-7pm, and Friday and Saturday, 3pm-7pm; $$ plus additional fees for planetarium shows.* Finally, the **Royal Jewelry Museum** contains the personal items (much more than just jewelry) of Farouk, last king of Egypt, and his family. For those who love glitz, this is about as wild a collection of excess as you can find. Take Tram #2 from the city center to Qasr as-Safa to get there. *27 Sharia Ahmed Yehia Pasha; open daily, 9am-4pm; $$$.*

EXCURSIONS TO CAIRO

Regardless of whether your ship docks at Alexandria or less-visited Port Said (see description on page 318), many passengers decide that what they really want to see is **Cairo**. It is relatively nearby, but not near enough. Let's look at the logistics. Some cruise ships call on Alexandria and some at Port Said and sometimes both on two successive days. In the latter case, it is sometimes possible (depending upon the cruise line) to leave the ship at the first port and take an overnight land excursion to Cairo, rejoining the ship at the second port. If Cairo is a place you simply must see, try to find an itinerary that allows you to do this. Even two days in Cairo isn't really enough, but it is far better than doing it in less than a day. Both Alexandria and Port Said are approximately 80 miles from Cairo. Given the relatively slow ground transportation in Egypt, a single day in Cairo will undoubtedly leave you disappointed with your visit and tired to boot! If you must use a day port call to see Cairo, you might as well do a cruise that calls on Port Said, since there is considerably less to see there than in Alexandria. Allowing

for a minimum of four hours getting to Cairo and back doesn't leave much sightseeing time. Don't bother if your total port call is less than 10 hours; even a 12-hour port call doesn't allow enough time for a guided shore excursion to do justice to Cairo's many wonders. But some people will feel this is a little is better than nothing at all. The shore excursion you select should include as many of the following major sights as possible. I've listed them in what I consider to be their order of importance.

Giza: This suburb of Cairo is where you'll see the great **Pyramids** and the equally famous **Sphinx**.

Egyptian Museum: About three times as large as the one in Alexandria. Its highlights include the galleries of Tutankhamun and the various Mummy Rooms.

Islamic Cairo: Includes the great bazaar of **Khan al-Khalili** and the **Mosque of al-Hakim**.

Citadel: A 12th-century walled city within a city. Has mosques, museums and nicely landscaped terraces offering good views of Cairo.

Shopping: Alexandria has become a modern, almost Western-style city when it comes to shopping. That means department stores and malls offering the same types of goods that you can get at home. For more traditional Egyptian crafts try the *souk* (or market) at Midan Tahir and Safiyya Zaghloul. Prices are not as low as you might expect, so do bargain vigorously.

Sports & Recreation: There are several beaches near the heart of the city along the Al-Corniche. Some are private (owned by the major hotels) and some are public. None is very appealing. The better "public" beaches are the ones that charge a fee for entry. Another problem (this one for women only) is that this is the conservative Muslim world, and Western-style women's bathing suits are frowned upon. You are expected to cover-up a great deal more than you would do a home.

Alicante/Cartagena, Spain

These two ports are separated by a distance of only 75 miles. A stop in one could be used to see either or parts of both via shore excursions. Stopping in both isn't something that any current itinerary does, but if there were such a trip, it certainly wouldn't say much

about the variety of ports offered. Alicante, with almost 300,000 residents, is the larger of the two ports and has much more to offer than Cartagena. However, the latter has a small advantage in that it is closer to **Murcia**. Murcia is some 35 miles north of Cartagena and there are some interesting shore excursions to that destination.

Arrival: In Alicante even the biggest ships can be accommodated at the modern passenger terminal and its three berths. Moreover, it is just a short walking distance from the main part of town and most of the sights. Cartagena has two quays that can accommodate all but the very largest cruise ships, but vessels now calling here are likely to be able to dock. There are no terminal facilities but the port is just an eighth of a mile from the city center, so you may choose to ignore the taxis that will be lined up ready to take you "into the city."

Tourism Information Offices: Alicante: Avendida Portugal 17, ☎ 965-929-802; *Cartagena:* Plaza Almirante Bastarreche, ☎ 968-506-483.

Getting Around: Alicante is a convenient port of call for walkers. Although the city is quite spread out, almost everything of interest is close to the cruise ship dock. Likewise, Cartagena's sights are well within reach by foot. Taxis can supplement walking for those who prefer. If you are going to be getting out of town (to Murcia or elsewhere) then you might consider renting a car. A better variety of cars will be found in Alicante. In either instance, there will be shore excursions offered.

Alicante's One-Day Sightseeing Tour: A major palm tree-lined thoroughfare called the **Explanada de España** runs parallel to the harbor and makes for a great place to stroll. Several interesting attractions are in the city center just north of the Explanada. These include the **Museum of Fine Arts** (Museo de Bellas Artes), an old museum in a new location (an 18th-century mansion), *Calle Gravina, $*; and the **Museo de la Asegurada**, which has an excellent collection of modern art, including works by Dali and Picasso. *Plaza Santa Maria at the intersection of Calles Major and Vilavieja. Open daily except Monday, 10am-5pm.* Another sight that might interest you is the **Concatedral de San Nicolás de Bari**, a cathedral. Unfortunately, it's open only during mass, so you'll probably get to see only the exterior. *Plaza de Abad Penalva 1.* The **Archaeological Museum** (Museo Arqueologico), is in a fine facility on Avenida de la Estación. But the best way to see Alicante is to cross the footbridge by the Playa de Postiquét and ride the funicular (*ascensor*) up to the 16th-century **Castillo de Santa Barbara**. This is a stunning fortress and palace complex and also offers outstanding views overlooking both the city and the sea. *Open daily except Saturday, 10am-7pm; $.*

Cartagena's One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Cartagena's sights are conveniently found in a relatively small area between the waterfront on the south and the Paseo de Alfonso XIII on the north. (Don't confuse the latter street by the similarly named Paseo de Alfonso XII near the harbor.) Cartagena's main attraction is the **Castillo de la Concepción**, just east of the harbor. This long structure was once a Moorish fortress. As you continue reading through the port descriptions for places in Spain and Portugal, you are going to read about numerous examples of splendid Moorish architecture. Although you might feel this gets somewhat repetitive, it's almost impossible to see too many of these wonderful architectural and historical treasures. The remainder of Cartagena's sights begin with the small **Zona Arqueologica**, which has some fairly well preserved Roman ruins. *East of Puertas de Murcia; open daily except Monday.* A **Roman amphitheater** and a good viewpoint overlooking the city walls round out the best of the rest. The **Plaza de Toros** is also in this area. If you're in town when there's a bullfight taking place, you might want to attend.

Outside the Two Cities: **Murcia** is about 50 miles from Alicante and 30 miles from Cartagena. This interesting destination shows evidence of its Roman and Moorish past. The architecture of the 14th-century **cathedral** is marvelous and contains a good museum and bell tower. There's a casino dating from the 19th century that was inspired by the Alhambra. (And you thought all the themed casinos were in Las Vegas!) Murcia is known for good shopping along its major pedestrian-only thoroughfare. Nearer to Cartagena (about 10 miles) is the area known as **La Manga del Mar Menor** (Little Sea). This area was once a bay, but changes over the eons have virtually enclosed it. As such, it has become Europe's biggest saltwater lake and is connected to the Mediterranean by four canals. It's an interesting place to see but most people come here for recreation (see below).

Shopping: While both Alicante and Cartagena are big enough to have shops selling every type of article, neither place is considered to be a destination for those who love to shop. If shopping is that important to you, it would be wise to consider a trip to Murcia instead.

Sports & Recreation: These two cities anchor a popular resort area. Within Alicante, **Playa de Postiguét** is the main beach in town, while farther out is the somewhat nicer **Playa de San Juan**. However, the top beaches are farther afield and can be reached by bus or taxi and, most likely, via shore excursion. The very best beach is about 15 miles southwest of Alicante in **Elche**. Also, the lovely **Costa Blanca** region, which begins only 20 miles northeast of Alicante, has many beaches.

Transportation options are the same as for Elche. There are many small resort towns in this area, each with its own great beach. Cartagena has fewer beaches nearby. A good choice is 10 miles away at **Cabo de Palos**. However, the previously cited **La Manga del Mar Menor** definitely offers the most unusual and most diverse recreational opportunities. Besides miles of nice beaches (both on the calm lake and by the Mediterranean), Mar Menor has a multitude of watersports, including sailing, waterskiing and windsurfing, to name just a few. The lake section is especially popular for sailing because it has no waves, so even novice sailors can act like an experienced sea captain.

Antalya, Turkey

Antalya is a lively resort with all the usual amenities and trappings of such places, including fine beaches. Like Istanbul, the modern city has a distinctly secular and almost Western atmosphere, although more traditional Turkish and Islamic cultural aspects are certainly present. Many Americans probably have never heard of Antalya, yet the city has grown enormously since the 1960s and now has a population of more than a half-million people. It overlooks a bay of the same name with its beaches and beautiful mountain vistas. While major population growth has taken place in the last 50 years, the site has been occupied since antiquity.

Arrival: Smaller vessels might be able to tie up at docks but in most cases cruise passengers will have to be tendered into the Roman Harbor. This, however, is quite convenient to all of the major sights.

Tourism Information Office: Cumhuriyet Caddesi 91, ☎ (0242) 241-1747.

Getting Around: Visitors to Antalya will find that there are two distinct sections. The modern city stretches inland north from Antalya Bay, while the older Ottoman part of town is concentrated to the east of the Roman Harbor. Most of the points of interest are in Ottoman Antalya, which is known as **Kaleiçi**, a term I'll use from now on to denote that section. Walking the streets of Kaleiçi is the most convenient method of getting from place to place. However, a modern tram with nine stops traverses the city near the waterfront. It runs along Kenan Evren Bulvari which becomes Cumhuriyet Caddesi as it approaches the center of the city, and then turns south as it passes through Kaleiçi along the Atatürk Caddesi. Buses and taxis are also plentiful, but the combination of walking and tram should serve city-only visitors quite well.

Another transportation option is the *dolmu* , shared taxis that ply a fixed route.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: There is much of interest besides the scenic setting and the resort atmosphere. Many sections of Kaleiçi have been nicely restored. Beginning with the **Roman Harbor**, which is now a marina for the yachts of the rich and is lined with high-end shops and restaurants, you're on the edge of Kaleiçi. Walk along the Izmirli Ali Afendi, which largely parallels some remaining sections of the Ottoman defensive walls until you reach Atatürk Caddesi. Here you'll encounter the **Yivli Minare**, a 13th-century minaret. The views from the square are wonderful. Nearby is the landmark **clock tower** and across the street is Antalya's main **bazaar**. Also worth a look is the **Tekeli Mehmet Pa a** mosque. Proceed down Atatürk Caddesi to the large and impressive **Hadrian's Gate**, which was built in marble by the famous Roman emperor in 120 AD. At the gate, turn right on Hesapçi and you'll soon reach the **Suna & Inan Kiraç Kaleiçi Museum**. This former mansion has fascinating exhibits detailing the life and customs during Ottoman times. It is a must-see for anyone who has any interest in learning more about the Ottomans. *Kocatepe Sokak 25, open Tuesday-Thursday, 9am-noon and 2pm-7pm; $.* At the southern end of Hesapçi is **Hidirlik Kulesi**, a 45-foot-high tower that was once incorporated into the system of walls. Although several theories have been advanced by scholars, no one knows the tower's original purpose.

The most important point of interest outside of Kaleiçi is the **Antalya Museum** on Cumhuriyet Caddesi, about a mile west of the Roman Harbor. The best way to get there is to take the tram to Müze station. This is an excellent history museum that covers pre-historic and ancient cultures. Especially impressive are the 16 statues in the beautiful Hall of Gods. There are also many statues of Roman emperors, along with stunning and well-preserved mosaics, coins and more. *Open daily except Monday, 9am-6pm; $$.*

Exploring Farther Afield: You can easily spend the day in Antalya itself, but there are other options to lure you away. **Boat tours** are popular. These are generally half-day trips that ply the beautiful coast with visits to some of the islands and to places like pretty **Düden Falls**. Almost all of these trips also allow some time at a beach for swimming and snorkeling. (Be careful of timing to get back to your ship if you aren't taking one through your shore excursion office.) Other possible excursions from Antalya visit some of the nearby ancient sites such as **Termessos, Perge** and **Silyon**. Most of the sites around Antalya reached their peak at around the time of Alexander the Great, and the extent and condition of the ruins is not

nearly as good as in many other places in Turkey. Nonetheless, the mountain scenery alone is almost worth the trip.

Shopping: A major activity is shopping in the town's large bazaar, although it pales in comparison to what's available in Istanbul. For a more upscale shopping experience, confine yourself to the Roman Harbor area.

Sports & Recreation: The beaches in or closest to Antalya aren't the best the Turkish coast has to offer – they are more pebbly than sandy. But, if you want to stay close to the city, then **Lara Plaji** is the best of the nearby beaches. It is about six miles from downtown. A *dolmu* ride costing less than a buck can get you there. **Konyaalti Plaji** is within walking distance from Müze train station. For a treat, take one of the boat rides to outlying beaches or ask if your shore excursion office is offering any beach trips. Antalya also has a number of traditional **Turkish baths** that welcome visitors.

Athens/Piraeus, Greece

Just as Rome evokes vivid images in the minds of people planning to visit, so too does Athens, with its famous Acropolis and other sites. It is, in many ways, the true birthplace of Western civilization. That alone would make it a desirable place to visit, but modern Athens (Athíni) is also a lively and energetic city with friendly people and lots of great dining and partying.

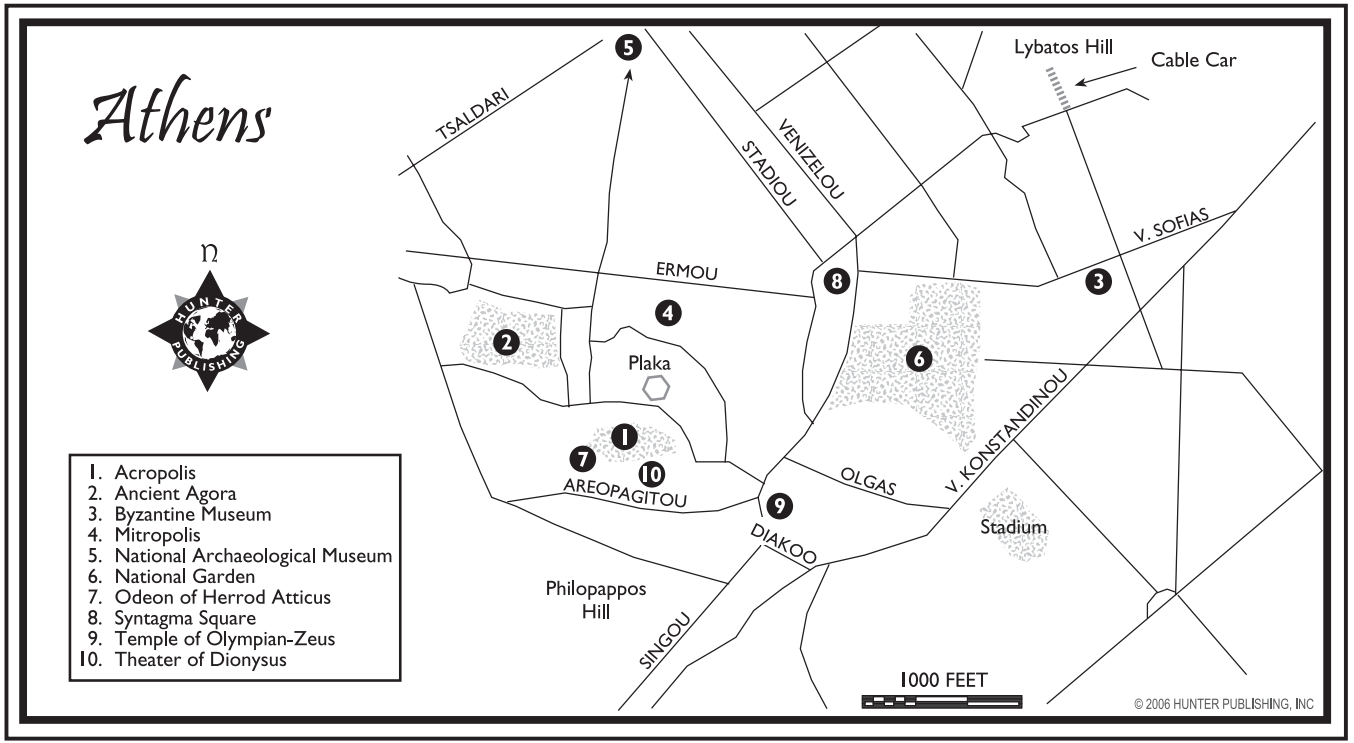
Arrival: The cruise ship terminal is approximately eight miles from the center of Athens in the crowded and bustling port city of **Piraeus**. It is a couple of miles from the terminal to downtown Piraeus. From the two newly remodeled port terminals, where up to 10 of the largest cruise ships can dock at the same time, you can get into Athens via a number of methods. Although the easiest is on a guided shore excursion, independent travelers can reach the city by taxi or by train. The train station in Piraeus is a fairly good walk from the cruise terminal around the harbor's edge (about 15 minutes) via Akti Miaouli and Akti Poseidonos. Just follow the harbor and you won't get lost even if you don't find the names of those streets. You might want to consider a short taxi ride there. Some cruise lines offer shuttle service to the train station.

Tourism Information Office: The main office of the Greek National Tourist Office is looking for new quarters. Right now there is a temporary visitor information center at Tsoha 7, off Vasilissis Sofias (metro station: Amblelopki), ☎ (2108) 707 000. There's also an office in the port of Piraeus, but it is not convenient to the ship terminal. Limited information is usually available at the cruise terminal itself. If

your cruise begins in Athens, you might want to visit the more convenient office located at the airport upon your arrival.

Getting Around: If you arrive by train you'll be close to all of the major attractions. Athens has recently enlarged its subway system and this is a fast, inexpensive and convenient way to get around when the distances between attractions get longer. At other times, walking is the best way. Athens has many hills; if you get tired of walking, finding a taxi usually isn't too difficult. Because of the patchwork quilt nature of the street layout and the fact that most signs are in Greek only, it can be confusing to find your way around. It's a good idea to get a detailed map, preferably one of those picture maps so that you can easily spot landmarks. They're available at just about any place frequented by visitors as well as tourist information offices. Shore excursions are the most convenient way to see things out of town. However, if you're in town on your own before or after the cruise, then you could either rent a car or sign up for locally operated tours.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Most visitors to Athens devote much of their time to the **Acropolis**, and that's where I suggest you begin your one-day highlight tour. Most people think that the Acropolis is the name of this particular place in Athens. But Acropoilis means "highest city," and it refers to any fortified area or citadel. You will encounter numerous places called acropolis as you travel through Greece. There is little doubt, however, that the Acropolis of Athens is the most famous. It dominates one of Athens' biggest hills and can be seen from just about anywhere in the city. It is approached by a long winding pathway that ascends from a street called Dionyssiou Aeropagitu. Along this street beneath the Acropolis are two ancient theaters that you'll get to before entering the Acropolis itself. These are the **Odeon of Herodes Atticus** and the **Theater of Dionysus**. The former is still used for concerts. It is now open to the public during the day when shows are not being given. The extensive remains of the other can be explored. *Open daily, 8:30am-7pm; $ each.* Once you reach the Acropolis itself you enter through a massive entry area called the **Beule Gate** and the **Propylaia**. Then, on the top of the hill are the remains of the many temples that graced the Acropolis during the glory days of Greece. Some are in terrible disrepair, while others are quite well preserved. An ongoing restoration process means that you might still see some scaffolding during your visit. It is easy to get a mental picture of what the Acropolis must have been like thousands of years ago. Among the more notable structures is the **Erechtheion**, with its famous columns in the form of women holding up the roof. But it's the symmetrical beauty of the **Pantheon** that is the highlight for almost everyone. Before leaving, stop by the **museum** to see the many


Athens
N
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1. Acropolis
2. Ancient Agora
3. Byzantine Museum
4. Mitropolis
5. National Archaeological Museum
6. National Garden
7. Odeon of Herrod Atticus
8. Syntagma Square
9. Temple of Olympian-Zeus
10. Theater of Dionysus
TSALDARI
STADIOU
VENIZELOU
Lybatos Hill
Cable Car
V. SOFIAS
ERMOU
Plaka
AREOPAGITOU
OLGAS
V. KONSTANDINOU
DIAKOO
Stadium
Philopappos Hill
SINGOU
1000 FEET
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sculptures and other artifacts that have been discovered on the Acropolis. Allow a minimum of 90 minutes to see the Acropolis and its museum. *Open daily, 8am-6:30pm, museum opens at noon on Mondays; $$$.*

North of the Acropolis is the **Ancient Agora**, once the commercial hub of old Athens. It contains the remains of beautiful temples and many *stoas* which were, in effect, the first shopping malls. The largest has been restored to its original appearance and the interior serves as a fine museum of ancient Athens. *Open daily except Monday, 8:30am-3pm; $$.* The maze of streets immediately east of the Agora are known as **Roman Athens**. While most Americans assume that all of the city's ancient monuments were truly Greek, one must remember that Athens was part of the Roman Empire for hundreds of years. Roman Athens is where you'll find what the conquerors erected. Here, interspersed with the buildings of the contemporary city, are remains of many temples, observatories and other structures that were built during the time when the Romans ruled. Among the major structures are the **Tower of the Winds** and a smaller **Agora** than the one we previously explored. *Pelopida Eolou and Marku Aureliou*; *open daily except Monday, 8:30am-3pm; $ each.* For now, you'll be leaving Roman Athens and you should continue in a generally easterly direction. You'll soon find yourself in an area known as the **Plaka**. If there's a tourist capital of Athens besides the Acropolis, this is it. Loaded with hotels, restaurants and shops, it's a most lively place where it is a delight just to wander aimlessly while taking in the local flavors. Most of the restaurants are outdoor cafés with reasonable prices and plenty of good food. You'll likely be approached by waiter after waiter, each pushing a menu into your hands and asking you to eat at his restaurant. It's a lot of fun. At night, the *tavernas* of the Plaka come alive with the sights and sounds of Greek music and dance.

The southeast edge of the Plaka is formed by the intersection of two busy streets, Dionyssiou Aeropagitpou and Amalias, one of Athens' most important thoroughfares. Cross Amalias and go through **Hadrian's Arch** into the **Temple of Olympian Zeus**. You are now, once again, in a part of Roman Athens. The remains of this fantastic Roman-era temple are somewhat limited today (several columns are standing and a few others are on their sides), but the park-like setting has great views of the Acropolis and you can get a wonderful appreciation of just how massive the original temple was. *Vasilissis Olgas 1; open daily except Monday, 8:30am-3pm; $.* Proceed north on Amalias past the **National Gardens**. If you think you'll have some extra time, wander in and take a break on the shade-covered benches in this mildly attractive area. Soon, Amalias reaches bustling **Syntagma Square**, the heart of commercial Athens and one of the

busiest places you'll ever see! On the left is the broad square itself, and on the right is **Parliament**. Visitors aren't allowed inside the Parliament and the building itself is nothing special to look at, but on the street below is Greece's **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**. It is constantly guarded by two soldiers in traditional military garb who march to and fro in front of the tomb. Bring your video camera! At 11am on Sunday, a more elaborate ceremony takes place here.

At the north end of Syntagma, turn right onto Vasilissis Sofias. This is embassy row. In about 10 minutes you'll reach the **Byzantine Museum**, housed in a Florentine-style neo-classical mansion that dates from 1848. The complex has been through some modifications and the galleries now sit around a pretty central courtyard. The museum has an excellent collection of Byzantine art forms (sculpture, paintings and icons, to name a few) dating from the fourth through the 19th centuries. *Vas. Sofias 22; open daily except Monday, 8:30am-3pm; $.* After you've finished at the museum, walk north on Ploutarchu. This street will eventually become a series of steps as you rise towards the base station of the **cable car** that will carry you up to the top of **Lykavitos Hill**, the tallest hill in Athens. At the top you'll have a superb panorama of all of the city (assuming that the weather is good and the pollution isn't too bad). If you've been quick as you tour, you still might have some time on this one-day whirlwind tour to explore some of the other sights of the hill. These include the small but lovely **St. George Church** and the **Theater of Lykavitos**. *Cable car operates from 9:15am-11:45pm; $.*

Additional Sights: The above should take most people a full day. You can see almost all of the major sights in Athens in just a couple of days, but there are many additional places worth your time, if you have it. The first on my supplemental list is the **National Archaeological Museum**, which has a superb collection of antiquities. *28th October Street 44; open daily, 8am-7pm (except on Monday when it opens at 12:30pm); $$.* The history of modern Greece is better explored at the **National Historical Museum**, which occupies the Old Parliament building. *Stadiou 13 at Kolokotioni; open daily except Monday, 9am-2pm.* Another excellent museum is the **National Gallery of Art**, *Vas. Konstandinou 50; open daily except Monday, 8:30am-7pm; $$.* If you can fit it into your schedule, try to spend some time in an area known as **Little Mitropolis**, northwest of the Plaka. Little Mitropolis is a bazaar-like shopping area. Although not like the bazaars of Turkey (which are enclosed and highly organized), browsing this open-air area is an enjoyable experience nonetheless. There's also a number of fine churches representative of the Byzantine style.

If you are spending a night in Athens you might want to head back to the Acropolis for the nightly **Sound & Light** show, which takes place on the **Pynx Hill**. It's a popular attraction, but not one I recommend. The narrative tends to be boring and the illumination of the Acropolis, although a grand sight at some times during the program, is disappointing overall. If you do go, be sure to check the schedule to make sure you'll get the English narrative. *$$.*

Outside the City: Those of you who are spending additional days in Athens either before or after your cruise might also choose to explore some of the more important archaeological sites in areas away from the city. These can be done via a series of day trips from Athens or on an overnight trip of either two or three days. Guided tours are available through your cruise line or by many operators in Athens (where you can almost certainly get a better price). Or you can do it on your own via bus or rental car. Driving in Greece can be complicated by a number of factors, including Greek language road signs. For those of you who do plan to be adventurous and drive yourself, here is a one-way mileage guide from central Athens to:Delphi, 100 miles; Sounion, 40 miles; Corinth, 50 miles; Návplion, 85 miles.

While a combination trip to **Corinth** (and the nearby ancient city of **Mycennae**) as well as **Návplion** might well be the best combined excursion from Athens if you head southwest, these sites are more associated with excursions from the port of Návplion. They will be described in more detail under that port of call, but are worth mentioning here because if you don't call on Návplion they are easily reached from Athens. In fact, if you are going to Corinth from Athens on your own, there is a new high-speed rail connection that can get you there in about 40 minutes.

There will be few arguments from experienced travelers that the single most important out-of-town destination is **Delphi**. Given the distance, the reasonably good roads most of the way, and the picturesque scenery, this makes for a great day trip from Athens. Delphi was one of the most important of the ancient Greek religious and political sites. The remains are all impressive, but especially awesome are the ruins of the round marble rotunda known as Tholos (4th century BC); the Great Altar; the treasury and stadium. The ancient Greeks believed Delphi was the center of the earth and came here to listen to the prophecies of the oracle in the magnificent natural setting between the sea and the mountains. Also relatively close to Athens is an excursion in the opposite direction (southeast) to the tip of the Attica peninsula, known as **Sounion**. The natural sights are lovely here as well. Of most interest are the ruins of the **Temple of Poseidon** which, befitting Poseidon's status as God of the Sea, overlooks the Aegean.

Shopping: Athens is a delightful place to shop for a wide variety of gifts both inexpensive and expensive. Various flea markets are extremely popular. The biggest is on the **Plateia Monastirakiou** off Adrianiou, just north of the Agora. Big on any day, the market grows even larger on Sunday when it spills into surrounding areas. There is also a flea market in Piraeus. The **Plaka**, although known mainly for its restaurants and nightlife, has many shops catering to tourists. If you are looking for traditional Greek crafts, the best place to shop is at the **Hellenic Folk Art Gallery** in the Plaka. Not only are the prices reasonable and the selection huge, but the profits at this government-owned establishment are used to encourage a continuation of Greek handicraft traditions. *Much can be said about the entire* **Little Mitropolis** area. When it comes to more upscale shopping, the better shops are located in the downtown core in the vicinity of Syntagma Square.

Sports & Recreation: Athens doesn't bring to mind sun and surf in the minds of most visitors and, given all that there is to see, that is understandable. However, if you're spending a lot of time in the Athens area and need a short recreational break from sightseeing, a number of good beaches aren't far away. The resort town of **Glyfada** is the number one choice. Located about seven miles southeast of Athens, the **Voula**, **Varkiza** and **Vouliagmeni Beaches** are all run by the government tourist office. There is a small admission ($) charge for each person, but the beaches have good facilities. Diving, tennis and golf are among the other popular diversions to be found in Athens. Although skiing in the nearby mountains is also popular, the skiing season does not coincide with the cruise ship season.

IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME

Because of the many variations in the way the Greek alphabet is transliterated into the Latin alphabet, I sometimes give more than one name for a location. This is done so as not to confuse those readers who may already be somewhat knowledgeable about places in Greece but know them in a slightly different form. This applies to all listings for Greece in the sections that follow.

Barcelona, Spain

Spain's second-largest city has about three million inhabitants and is one of the most beautiful, interesting and vibrant cities in the world. Its history encompasses rule by Phoenicians, Carthaginians, the Romans, Visgoths and Moors before the independence of Spain as a

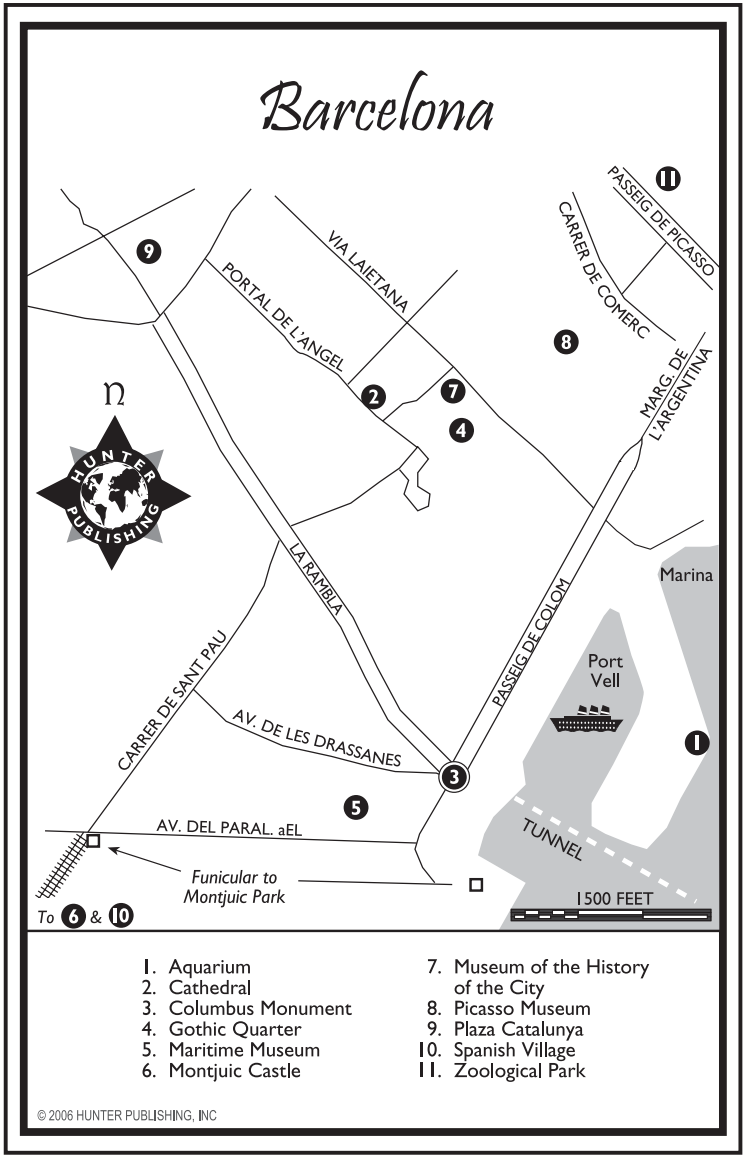
nation. It is the capital of Catalonia, an autonomous region of Spain that even has its own language (so don't be surprised to see a lot of words you don't recognize as Spanish). Barcelona has an intense but mostly friendly rivalry with Madrid as Spain's cultural, business and tourist capital.

Arrival: The international cruise ship port here can accommodate the largest ships in the world. It's called **Moll de Adossat** and is located just southeast of downtown in an area known as Las Ramblas, near the junction of the Ronda Litoral. There are a couple of other terminals that might be used if the Moll de Adossat is filled up, including the World Trade Center terminal. These are not significantly farther from town. This is great for those who have just one day to explore as it is near many of the most important attractions while others are easily reached by public transportation. Some cruise lines provide courtesy transportation to the city center.

Tourism Information Office: Plaça de Catalunya 17-S, ☎ 933-043-135, is the main office. There's also an office at the Plaça Sant Jaume 1 in the Gothic Quarter, ☎ 906-301-282.

Getting Around: For sights in downtown Barcelona and older sections of the city near the port, it is best to get around by old-fashioned shoe leather. Barcelona has an excellent Metro system with five lines that is supplemented by trams and a suburban rail system that goes to points of interest on the fringes and outside the city. The stations of several lines are within an easy walk of the port. Large maps of the system are on display at all stations and it is simple to use. You can get just about anywhere via the fast, clean, safe and efficient Metro. The cost is reasonable. Hilly Barcelona also has a number of funicular railways that are almost in the class of attractions themselves. One other transit option, depending upon which pier your ship is docked, is the **Aerial Harbor Cable Car**. This connects the Moll de Barcelona with the area near Montjuic**.** *Operates daily from 11am to 9pm.* Consider purchasing the *Dia T1* pass which is good for a full day of unlimited rides on the Metro. The cost is *$$$.* For other places there's an extensive system of buses but these aren't as easy to negotiate if you don't speak the language. Therefore, taxis are a good idea. If you are planning to remain in Barcelona then there's little need to consider a shore excursion because public transportation is so well developed.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Barcelona is one of Europe's most sight-filled cities and no one could possibly do it justice in a single day. If you are on a cruise that begins or ends in Barcelona (and many do), I would strongly suggest adding some time so you can see more. It would not be an overstatement to say that even five days in Barcelona isn't enough! The city offers the **Barcelona Card**, which is a



good value if you're going to be visiting a lot of museums. Available in one- , two- and three-day versions, it offers free admission to many museums as well as use of public transportation. You can get it at the Tourist Office.

The one-day tour begins at **La Rambla**, which runs from the waterfront north into the city center. It's a broad tree-lined pedestrian mall that's always humming and filled with activity. It's packed with interesting shops, markets and people, and is a great place to stroll and people watch.

The sights begin with the **Columbus Monument**, which stands on top of a tall pedestal. It can be reached via an elevator. *Elevator operates daily, 10am-6:30pm (except on weekdays between 1:30 and 3pm); $*. Note that claustrophobic individuals may find the elevator too small. Nearby is the **Maritime Museum** (Museu Maritim), an excellent facility that explores the relationship of Barcelona with the sea. The museum occupies an area that was once the extravagant royal shipyards constructed in the 14th century. *Plaça Portal de la Pau 1. Open daily ,10am-7pm; $$.* Continuing north on La Rambla, note the extravagant façade on the **Liceu Grand Theater** (Gran Teatro del Liceu). *Rambla 51-59 at Plaça Boqueria*. *Tours of the elaborate interior are offered daily at 10am; $$.*

Head east on Ferran for a few blocks through the narrow maze-like streets of the **Gothic Quarter** to the splendid **cathedral** and its beautiful cloister. Ascend the elevator to the top, as the views from the cathedral's roof are splendid. *Pla de la Seu. Open daily, 7:45am-1:30pm and 4-7:45pm; $ only for elevator to roof.* In the adjacent **Placa del Rei** you'll find the not-to-be-missed **City History Museum**, which occupies several buildings of the medieval Aragonian kings. The best parts of the museum complex are the royal chapel and the tunnel that gives a glimpse into the former Roman- and Visgothic-era ruins. It is on these ruins that modern Barcelona is built. *Carrer del Veguer 2. Open daily except Monday, 10am-2pm and 4pm-8pm (no late hours on Sunday); $$.*

Go back toward the waterfront in the vicinity of Port Vell, the yacht harbor formed by the hook-shaped Moll D'Espanya which juts into the ocean. Walk to the west along the waterfront and you will soon enter a series of gardens – **Jardin de Miramar, Jardin de Mossen Gosta i Llobera** and **Jardin del Mirador**. But these pretty spots are just a prelude of what is to come. Take the **cable railway** up to **Montjuic**, Barcelona's most famous hilltop. The ride itself is spectacular and at the top is **Castell de Montjuic** and its **Military Museum**. Both offer a fascinating look – architecturally and through exhibits – at the history of the city. *Open daily except Monday, 10am-2pm and 4-7pm (no late hours on Sunday); $. The railway operates daily 11am-9:30pm; telerific to top has the same hours; each $.* Other funiculars and chair lifts lead to different parts of Montjuic, including several other gardens and museums, but day visitors will not have time to visit them.

Back down at the shore level, head back up Rondal del Litoral and you'll soon come to the **Aquarium** (L'Aquarium), one of the largest, most modern and entertaining aquariums in Europe. *Port Vell, Moll de Espanya. Open daily, 9:30am-9pm; $$.*

Go back to the main street along the waterfront and continue once again on Rondal del Litoral until you come to **Parc de la Ciutadella** (Little City Park). The park contains a museum of modern art and a zoo (which will require more than a day trip to see) and the fabulous **cascada**, a series of waterfalls, statues and wonderful urban park landscaping.

No trip to Barcelona (even a day trip) would be complete without seeing the famous **Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Familia** (Holy Family). Construction on this awesome cathedral was begun in 1882 and the final towers won't be finished until sometime around 2050! It currently has nine towers – each exceeding 325 feet – which are the first installment of a planned 18 towers, one for each of the apostles. You can ascend them via spiral staircases or elevators. La Sagrada Familia is known for its majestic vast spaces and extravagant sculptured style. They are the hallmarks of its architect, Antoni Gaudi y Cornet, known to the world as Gaudi (1852-1926). Gaudi was educated in Barcelona and lived here most of his life. He is Spain's most famous architect and his works combine elements of neo-Gothic and Art Nouveau with cubism and surrealism. Gaudi is buried in the temple's crypt. The views from the bell tower are awesome so be sure to take the elevator to the top. This is, without a doubt, one of the most unusual church structures in the world. Even the cursory visitor should plan on spending at least an hour here, and you could spend four times that. *Plaza de la Sagrada Familia. Open daily, 9am-8pm; $$$.* Many of Gaudi's other buildings and landscape projects grace Barcelona. If you'd like to learn more about them, visit the Tourist Office and ask the helpful staff.

Additional Sights: Since most people won't be spending more than a few days in Barcelona, even if they embark or debark here, what follows is an incomplete listing of suggested attractions.

The **Boqueria** food market (where the food is safe to sample) is in a very large square surrounded by a colonnade of attractive Doric-style columns. The place is a riot of colors and aromas. The best time to visit is in the morning. *Rambla 91, near the Theater Liceu*.

Eixample is a neighborhood that lies just to the east of the Sagrada Familia. It has a large number of elegant houses built in the second half of the 19th century by Barcelona's wealthiest citizens. Many can be toured. Another interesting section of town is **La Ribera**, a great place for wandering around narrow streets and viewing historic buildings. You'll also find two museums of great interest. The first of

these is the **Picasso Museum** (Museu Picasso), housed in a medieval mansion. *Carrer Montcada 15-19; open daily except Monday, 10am-8pm (till 3pm on Sunday); $$.* The other worthwhile stop is the **Textile & Costume Museum**. Although it may not sound particularly inviting, it is well known for its fine collection of tapestries. *Carrer de Montcada 12; open daily except Monday, 10am-5pm (until 2pm on Sunday); $.*

Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya: Housed in the ornate former palace known as the Palau Nacional, this has an outstanding collection of artwork covering a broad swath of European artistic history, although Spanish artists are featured. *Mirador del Palau 6, in the Montjuic section. Open daily except Monday, 10am-7pm (open till 9pm on Thursday and closes on Sunday at 2:30pm); $$.*

Parc Guell, north of downtown, is where you'll find architect Gaudi's landscape work at its best. Here, man has improved on nature in a beautiful park setting that has been enhanced with arches, ironwork, stone trees, fountains and more. It is a colorful, fanciful and even surreal place that is sure to take your mind off the world. *Carrer d'Olot, open daily, 10am-7pm.* In the park, among other things, is the **Casa-Museu Gaudi**, where the artist lived for a time. *Daily, 10am-8pm; $.*

Many people will tell you that **Santa Maria del Mar**, in the Gothic quarter, is Barcelona's most beautiful church. It is noted for its graceful columns and outstanding vaulting. *Plaça Santa Maria, open Monday-Friday, 9am-1:30pm and 4:30pm-8pm.*

The **Spanish Village** (Pueblo Español), on Montjuic Hill, is a good place to see craftspeople at work and the area is very much alive with activity during the evening. Note the unusual façades on the village's buildings, which represent various architectural styles of Spain's historic regions. *Open daily, 9am until at least 8pm, but much later on most evenings; $$.*

Exploring Farther Afield: A half-day excursion to **Tibidubo** is a very enjoyable trip. This hill stands at 1,765 feet (the highest surrounding Barcelona) and is reached by a funicular railway (*operates every half-hour, 7am-9pm; $)*. Among the sights on Tibidubo is a church with a giant statue of Christ and a 900-foot communications tower high. You can reach the observation deck via an outside elevator. Take this trip only on a day when the weather forecast is clear. Another great excursion is to **Montserrate** and its monastery, some 35 miles from the port. You can do this either on your own (rental car, commuter train or bus can get you there) or via your cruise line's excursion office. Spectacularly situated in a gorge-like section of the beautiful Sierra de Monserrat mountains, the **Monestir de Montserrat** draws the faithful and the nature lover alike. The former come to see the

Black Madonna (*La Moreneta*), the patron saint of Catalunya and the icons in the museum. Those who appreciate scenery will just love riding the system of funiculars that lead up to the monastery and beyond, where there are great views and plenty of hiking trails at an elevation of 3,500 feet. *Open daily, 6am-10:30am and noon-6:30pm. The museum is closed on Sunday and Monday between 2pm and 3pm. There is a small fee for each funicular.*

Shopping: Barcelona is one of the great cities of the world and, as one would expect, it has countless places to shop. Be forewarned that, although there is high quality and a fabulous selection, Barcelona is not a place to seek bargains. It has many modern malls; Barcelona's most noted department stores are El Cortes Inglés, FNAC and Habitat. They have many locations, including at the Plaça de Catalunya. Ceramics are a highly prized item from all over Spain and Barcelona is no exception. Try the expansive **Art Escudellers** in the Gothic Quarter at Calle Escudellers 23-25 for the best selection and prices that aren't exorbitant.

Sports & Recreation: Barcelona and the surrounding area has the usual assortment of golf courses, health clubs, tennis courts and everything else associated with a city of this size and status. My question is, however, who would want to come to Barcelona for sporting activities when there is so much else to offer?

Bodrum, Turkey

For many years Bodrum was a sleepy little town. It's still small, population-wise, but is no longer at all sleepy. It's about as lively as you can get in Turkey without going to Istanbul. Bodrum is always bustling with throngs of people who come here to take in the sun and sea and to do some serious partying. In fact, a large number of cruise passengers who come here take advantage of Bodrum's resort opportunities.

Arrival: Transportation into the port is by tender. Once ashore, most things are pretty close at hand, including the ubiquitous shops and vendors.

Tourism Information Office: Kale Meydani, near the Castle, ☎ (0252) 316 1091.

Getting Around: Everything in town is close by and walking is a viable means of getting around. You can take a taxi if you get tired. The focal points are Cumhuriyet Caddesi, which runs along Kumbahe Bay, and Neyzen-Tevfik Caddesi, which goes along the harbor and Salmakis Bay. These two bays are separated by a small peninsula where the Castle is located. Shore excursions often visit more tradi-

tional nearby Turkish villages or take you to outlying beaches which are generally nicer than those in Bodrum.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: There are several places to see in Bodrum itself. You might even have time to enjoy these things in addition to a short excursion. Bodrum goes way back in history. In fact, the **Mausoleum** (the tomb of King Mausolus who died in 353 BC) was one of the original Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It has been destroyed on several occasions by both natural causes (earthquakes) and by man (over-exuberant Crusaders). But you can still visit what is left. Some visitors who make this trip are disappointed, but those with a good sense of history will appreciate it. *Saray at Turgutreis Caddesi; open daily except Monday, 8am-noon and 1-5pm; $.* In far better shape is Bodrum's principal attraction, the former **Castle of St. Peter**, which dates from 1402. It is fascinating to explore the many towers, dungeons and other aspects of the original fortress. Today, the castle is home to the outstanding **Museum of Underwater Archaeology**, one of the few such facilities in the world. The prize piece in its collection is a well-preserved shipwreck of a seventh-century Byzantine vessel. *On promontory between the ancient harbor and Kumbahçe Bay; open daily except Sunday, 8am-noon and 1pm-5pm; $$.* There are also scattered small remains of other ancient sites.

Boat trips that last up to six hours (make sure you have enough time to get back to your ship if venturing out on your own) take visitors to see the **hot springs** and **caves** of **Black Island**. Like most boat trips in Turkish resorts, they allow some time at a lovely beach. Another site that the boats visit is a place called the **"Aquarium"** because the crystal-clear waters allow visitors to peer into the water and see fish. Shore excursions from Bodrum most often explore the Bodrum Peninsula, a hilly area with interesting rock formations and great views of the sea. The peninsula also has some smaller resort towns and some ancient ruins, none of which is particularly notable. You can rent a car in Bodrum to get to the peninsula.

Shopping: As a resort, you'll find plenty of shops in Bodrum. You'll find more local flavor at the market.

Sports & Recreation: Beaches are the main recreational pursuit. Several are along the coastal road within five to 10 miles from Bodrum and they can be reached by *dolmu* . The best beaches are on the southern coast of the Bodrum Peninsula to the west of town. There are also numerous Turkish baths.

Cádiz/Seville, Spain

Cádiz is one of a seemingly endless number of historic Spanish cities. Although there are a number of interesting things to see here, the town certainly doesn't rank among the great attractions of Spain. Many cruise passengers use their port of call time in Cádiz to take an excursion to **Seville**, one of the tourist treasure troves of the Iberian Peninsula. It is about 80 miles north of Cádiz. Although you could rent a car or travel by public transportation to Seville, it is more efficient (although not less expensive) to take a tour. Depending upon your ship's itinerary you may choose to skip Cádiz itself and Seville if you want to venture to Gibraltar, which is about the same distance in the opposite direction. (Gibraltar, however, is a major port of call and is described separately.) Seville is one of Spain's biggest, most beautiful and interesting cities. Although it is located inland, some of the smaller yacht-style cruise ships can navigate up the river to reach Seville. However, this is the exception and the overwhelming majority of visitors will be getting off their ship at Cádiz.

Arrival: Ships tie up at the Cádiz Bay Port (also called the City Dock), only a short distance from the city center. Tenders are rarely required. Only small ships are able to sail up the river directly to Seville. If they do, you'll dock near the heart of the city.

Tourism Information Office: Cádiz: Avenida Ramón de Carranza, 956 258 646. Seville: Avenida de la Constitución 21, ☎ 954-221-404.

Getting Around: Cádiz city is crowded onto a small island just off the mainland and the best way to get around is on foot. The old city, where everything of interest will be found, is only a little more than a half-mile across and less than that from north to south. Seville, although much larger, also has most of its attractions in a compact area that is best negotiated on foot. Most Seville visitors will be on a guided tour, which means they won't have to worry about getting around as a bus will deliver them to anyplace that is a bit farther away.

Cádiz' One-Day Sightseeing Tour: You might be hard-pressed to fill up a full day in Cádiz itself, another reason why lots of people head off to Seville. On the other hand, you could easily spend a half-day touring Cádiz and the rest of the time on a shore excursion to the popular nearby sherry-producing areas. Cádiz is the oldest continually inhabited city in Western Europe, dating back more than 3,000 years to the Phoenicians. Start by exploring the ring road, which circles the island. This will give you a good overview and also offers many scenic viewpoints. The biggest attraction is the huge 18th-century **cathedral** that sits opposite the waterfront on the south side of

town. *Cathedral museum open Monday-Friday, 10am-2pm and 4:30pm-7:30pm; Saturday, 10am-5pm; $.* Adjacent to it are the ruins of a **Roman theater**. Another site of interest is the **Castillo de Santa Catalina** (Santa Catalina Castle), a fortress that dates from the end of the 16th century. It's adjacent to the Playa de la Caleta, off Avenida Duque de Najera. *Open Monday-Friday, 10am-6pm, and on weekends, 10am-2pm.* The **Cádiz Museum** (Musee de Cádiz) has galleries covering both archaeology and fine arts. *Plaza de Mina. Tuesday, 2:30pm-8pm; Wednesday-Saturday, 9am-8pm; Sunday, 9:30am-2pm; $.*

After finishing at the museum, take some time to explore the beautiful **Plaza de Mina**. It is flanked by impressive buildings, the most notable of which is the **Colegio de Arquitectos**, known for its wonderfully ornate façade.Perhaps the most unusual attraction in Cádiz is the **Torre Tavira**, an old watchtower that now has, in addition to some fine views, a *camera obscura*. This periscope-like device projects panoramic images of the city on a large screen. *Intersection of Calles Sacramento and Marqués del Real Tesorio. Daily, 10am-8pm; $ for camera obscura only.* A final interesting attraction is the **Museo Histórico Municipal**. Most of the exhibits are rather mundane and typical of this kind of museum, but worth the visit alone is the late 18th-century model of the city. Built of ivory and mahogany, it details every building in the city at the time. The city outside the museum doesn't look all that different today. *Santa Inés 9, open daily except Monday, 9am-1pm and 5pm-8pm. No late hours on the weekend.*

***Seville's One-Day Sightseeing Tour**:* In a nation of fascinating cities, Seville ranks among the very best. Because of its distance from Cádiz, it is likely that you'll have a maximum of only five hours of sightseeing time, regardless of whether you go on your own or with a shore excursion. Therefore, this discussion is based on that time frame. The number of cruise ship visitors who sail directly to Seville is too small to warrant a more detailed itinerary but, should you be in that group, you'll have no trouble finding additional things to see and do. Even though Seville is a big city with attractions all over (and in the suburbs), the most important sights are found in a relatively small area mostly adjacent to the **Canal de Alfonso XIII**, which runs through Seville. Here are the main **cathedral** and its accompanying **Giralda Tower**. Built in the early 14th century where a mosque had been (the minaret and courtyard remain and were beautifully incorporated into the structure), it is a huge place with imposing architecture and countless works of art. *Plaza Virgen de los Reyes, open daily, 11am-5pm (2:30-6pm on Sunday); $$$ (free on Sunday).* As magnificent as the cathedral is (regardless of how many splendid European cathedrals you've visited), the real highlight of Seville is the spectacu-

lar Moorish **Alcazar** with its gorgeous gardens and fountains, vast and elaborate halls, wonderful gates and the Royal Chambers in the Palace of Charles V. If you only visit one Alcazar while in Spanish ports, make it this one. Plan to spend about two hours exploring all that the Alcazar has to offer. *Plaza del Triunfo. Open daily except Monday, 9:30am-8pm (until 6pm on Sunday); $$ plus $ additional for the tour of the Royal Chambers.* Not too far away is the colorfully ornate **Plaza de España**. Built in 1929 for an international exhibition, the semi-circular monument contains beautiful tiled pictures in each of its 50 arches, representing the historic provinces of Spain. The four bridges over the artificial lake represent the medieval kingdoms of Spain. Many activities take place in the plaza. If you're lucky enough to be here during such a time it just adds to the color.

The attractions described below might well fill up all of your available time. If not, try either or both of the **Museo de Bellas Artes** (Museum of Fine Arts); and **Torre del Oro** (Tower of Gold), a 12-sided Moorish structure along the canal that was once part of the city's fortifications. If you have children with you, consider spending some time at **Isla Magic**, an amusement park left-over from a world exhibition. It's on a small island not too far from the historic center and can be reached by a cable car for some extra fun.

Shopping: Cádiz isn't a great shopping destination, but it is known for its good selection of Andalusian handicrafts, most notably ceramics and wicker. While Seville has lots of shopping it would be a shame to spend your limited hours there in such a manner. However, you might want to take a few minutes out while in the historic center to pick out a few souvenirs as this part of the city is loaded with shops selling just about everything in a wide range of prices.

Sports & Recreation: In Cádiz you can soak up the sun at the popular **Playa de la Caleta**, located at the western end of town. Seville has many sporting opportunities but, once again, you really won't have time for this on a day visit. Should you be there for a full day on one of the luxury-yacht-sized ships, then you might want to spend some time paddling on the river or attending a bullfight.

Cagliari (Sardinia), Italy

Sardinia (*Sardegna* in Italian) is the second-largest island in the Mediterranean. It is a mountainous island that is roughly rectangular in shape, extending 166 miles from north to south and 75 miles from east to west. The highest point on the island is over 6,000 feet. Seemingly always on the invasion route of Mediterranean empires, Sardinia has been under many different flags. Even today, many people

on Sardinia don't regard themselves as Italian. The island is much more rural than most other places in Italy, and you'll find it significantly different. However, the differences aren't as great between Sardinians and mainland Italians as they are, for example, between Corsicans and residents of mainland France.

Besides Cagliari, possible ports of call include Alghero (described later) and Porto Cervo. Ships have sometimes also been known to call on Olbia or Costa Smeralda, but this is very rare. Alghero (on the northeast coast) and Cagliari (on the south) are the two ports that are most distant from one another – about 155 miles one-way, so don't expect to be able to dock at one port and visit the other! However, I will describe possible visits to other places outside of town.

With approximately 200,000 residents, Cagliari is Sardinia's primary port and largest city. It is surprisingly big-city sophisticated considering the rural nature of the rest of the island.

Arrival: Recent additions to the port facilities mean that you're likely to tie up at the dock at one of seven berths. There are full terminal facilities. The city center is just a short walk from the port. However, some of the sights are as far as 1½ miles from the harbor. So, while you could walk, a taxi might be in order for some.

Tourism Information Office: Stazione Maritima; ☎ (070) 668 352.

Getting Around: Although Cagliari is rather spread out, most of the attractions are located in the older portion of the city closest to the dock. For the few places that are a little farther, you might consider hopping into a taxi. There aren't that many destinations outside of the city that can be reached in a day trip and Sardinia's road system isn't the best. Therefore, for anything out of town you will be best off signing up for a shore excursion.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: It is the hilly Medieval section of Cagliari that you'll want to spend the most time exploring. The majority of sights are found in the area known as **Il Castello**. Contained within these massive stone walls, which are quite an impressive sight by themselves, is the fascinating Medieval town with its maze of narrow, winding streets. It's an uphill but not very difficult walk from the harbor to the **Piazza Martin d'Italia**, the large square that is the primary entrance to Il Castello. A few blocks north from this plaza is the **Piazza Palazzo** where the **Cattedrale di Santa Maria** (*duomo*) is. *Open daily, 8am-12:30pm and 4:30-8pm.* Just a bit farther north is the attractive 13th-century **Piazza Indipendenza** and a few steps later to the **Piazza Arsenale**. In and around this plaza are many interesting places to see. The first is the **Torre di San Pancrazio**, a Pisan-built defensive tower and the only one of the original fortifications still standing. *Open daily except Monday, 9am-*

1pm and 3:30-7:30pm. The **Citadella dei Muei**, in the former arsenal, is a virtual city of museums, with four distinct facilities. Since you have limited time, there are two museums that you should concentrate on. Sardinia's ancient past comes alive at the **National Museum of Archaeology** (Museo Archeologico Nazionale). *Piazza Arsenale; open daily except Monday, 9am-8pm; $$.* Also highly rewarding is the **Pinocoteca Nazionale**, which has an excellent art collection. *Same hours as Archaeology Museum, $.* The other two museums are closed between 1pm and 4pm. They are *$* each. A combination ticket for all the museums can save you some money. Not far from the museum complex is the **Roman amphitheater** which is so well preserved that it is still used for theater productions. Nearby, west of the walls is the pretty **Orto Botanico** gardens.

Back down in the waterfront area are numerous old churches that you can explore. The **Chiesa di Sant'Eulalia** isn't any better than the others as a church, but beneath it is the **Museo del Tesoro**, where you can see a section of a Roman road that was found when the land was being excavated to build the church. *Vico del Collegio 2. Museum open daily, 10am-1pm and 5pm-11pm; $.*

Shopping: While you can find plenty of ordinary stores in downtown Cagliari, it would be wiser to head for **Isola**, *Via Bacaredda 176*, for an excellent selection of Sardinian crafts. It is run by an organization devoted to encouraging local craftspeople.

Sports & Recreation: There are several nice beaches about two miles east of the city. These can be reached either by taxi or bus.

Cannes, France

Other than Monte Carlo, there's no place on the Côte d'Azur besides Cannes that more typifies what the French Riviera is all about. It has been a gracious resort for more than 150 years. It's fame as a place in the sun has been made even more widespread because of the world-renowned international film festival held each May. Cannes is a town of about 70,000 residents and sits in a picturesque natural setting.

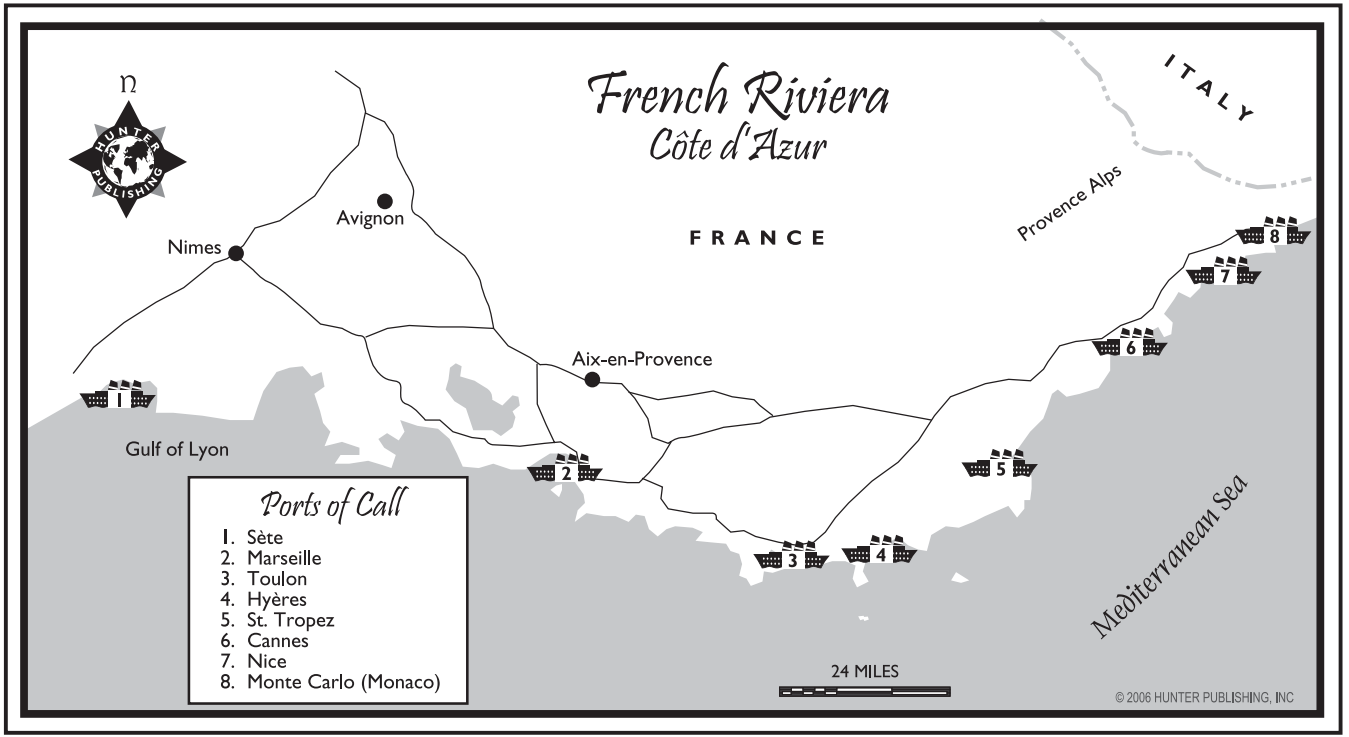
Arrival: The port of Cannes is quite modern, but it's not large enough to accommodate most of today's larger ships, so tender service will be required for your visit if the ship is more than 500 feet long. In addition, the shallow draft of the harbor (only 16 feet) means that even many vessels less than the length limit will still have to anchor outside the harbor. However, once you arrive at the dock by tender, you'll be in a short walk of the city center.

Tourism Information Office: Palais des Festivals, on the Esplanade Pompidou, ☎ (04) 9290 5301.

Getting Around: The heart of the town is small and walking is the best means of getting around. Taxis are available for places that are a little farther away. The railroad station is only a third of a mile from the port for those who plan to go to other French Riviera communities by train.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: The rectangular shaped **Vieux Port** (where you'll be dropped off) is usually filled with a large number of sizable yachts belonging to the rich and famous. Dominating the scene on the east side of the port is the **convention center**, Palais des Festivals et des Congres. There are often exhibits taking place that will be of interest to visitors. Speaking of festivals, the entire area around the Vieux Port has a festive atmosphere which makes it an interesting place to stroll around. Don't leave the area near the information center without taking a look at the **Allée des Etoiles** (Stars' Walk). As in Hollywood, luminaries of the film industry have left their autographed handprints in the cement. There are now more than 300 names. By the way, although you might catch a glimpse of some stars should you be in port during the Film Festival, tickets to the screenings and events are reserved for industry people and their friends. The **Boulevard de la Croisette** (or simply la Croisette as it's known to just about everyone) is where many of Cannes' beautiful and often famous resort hotels are found. A walk along this palm tree-lined promenade that extends for about a mile and going into some of the hotels is worthwhile. One of the most fascinating aspects of walking la Croisette is to watch the people-watchers looking for the "beautiful people." From the look of things, there are far more wannabee beautiful people than the former variety. The morning **Marché Forville**, or food market, is colorful. The **Musée de l'Enfance** (Museum of Childhood) has an excellent collection of antique dolls. *2 Rue Venizelos, open by appointment only; $.*

Just west of the Vieux Port is **Le Suquet**, a hill that affords wonderful views of Cannes. It can be reached by a number of stairs or winding streets off rue Georges Clemençeau. Atop the hill in a beautiful chateau is the **Cultural Museum** (*Museé de la Castre*) and the four-sided **Suquet Tower**. The ethnographic museum is a good facility with a fine display of antiquities from all over the Mediterranean and Middle East regions. *Place de la Castre; open daily except Tuesday, 10am-noon and 3-7pm; $.* The island of **Ile Ste. Marguerite** is less than a mile offshore and worth a trip. It was made famous by the hero of Alexander Dumas' novel, *The Man in the Iron Mask,* who was held captive here. Many eucalyptus and pine trees grow on this pretty island and an extensive network of paths meanders around.



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Ferries leave from the northeast corner of the Vieux Port and the ride takes only about 15 minutes each way. *$ for one-way ferry fare.*

Finally, Cannes offers two casinos in case you want a chance to lose some of your money. Unlike the casinos in Monte Carlo, you should be able to get into these without being all dressed up (but beachware is a definite no-no).

Shopping: As a world-class resort, it is no surprise that Cannes is home to a large number of upscale shops selling all sorts of goods, although there is an emphasis on fashion. A major shopping area will be found just a few blocks of la Croisette. It parallels the former along the Rue d'Antibes. **Rue Meynadier** is another place where you will find excellent shopping. **La Suquet** also offers many shops of all types, but here you can also find a number of places that sell items made in the neighboring Provence region.

Sports & Recreation: Many of the beaches found along la Croisette are associated with the hotels and are private property. This does not mean, however, that you can't use them – it simply means that you'll have to fork over some of your money to get in. The public beaches in town are considered less desirable. There are also many beaches outside of Cannes that can be reached by taxi. Sailing on the beautiful blue waters around Cannes is very popular. There are scheduled sailing trips leaving from the Vieux Port or you can rent a sailboat. Check your shore excursion office beforehand, though, since these are probably offered to guests.

◆ For details on **Capri**, Italy, *see* Naples, Italy, page 229.
For details on **Cartagena**, Spain, see Alicante, Spain, page 138.

Casablanca, Morocco

Of all Moroccan ports, Casablanca is probably the best known to Americans. That is no doubt due to the romantic connotations it has for Hollywood movie buffs who remember the Humphrey Bogart film of the same name. However, the town of Casablanca really has nothing to do with that at all. In reality, Casablanca is actually the most modern and least exotic of all the major Moroccan cities. With nearly five million people, it is also the largest by far. Another aspect of Casablanca is that it is somewhat of a resort, with many fine beaches located close to the heart of the city. Casablanca can also be a jumping-off point for excursions to Marrakech and Rabat.

Arrival: Casablanca is a major commercial port and only ships under 940 feet and with a draft of no more than 28 feet will be able to tie up

at the dock. These measurements allow for the great majority of today's vessels currently scheduled to visit Casablanca. The terminal and its three berths have all necessary facilities. It is somewhat more than a quarter-mile to the city center. Taxis and shuttles are available for those who do not care to walk.

Tourism Information Office: 55 rue Omar Slaoui, ☎ 271-177.

Getting Around: There is a system of buses but I don't recommend it for Westerners. If on your own, take a taxi to any outlying areas. Within the tourist heart of the city (the Medina), walking is the best way to get around.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Casablanca can be nicely divided into a modern section and a smaller and older walled city, which is called the **Medina**. This is a term you will encounter as you read descriptions of other North African ports of call. Like the Acropolises found throughout Greece, just about all Arab cities have a Medina. The Medina of Casablanca has several interesting mosques, the best of which is the **Al-Djemma**. *Just inside Medina gate by the clock tower at the intersection of Ave. des Forces Armeés Royales & Blvd. Houphouet Boigny.* Spend some time wandering around the Medina's crooked street and then follow the walls to its northern tip by the ocean. From here you will be met with the awe-inspiring sight of the **Hassan II Mosque**, the third-largest religious structure in the world. Although it has all of the elements of traditional mosque construction that have been used for hundreds of years, it was completed only in 1993. Unlike most mosques, which you visit independently, the Hassan II offers guided tours (some in English) that are sure to enhance your appreciation of the many artistic elements throughout. Self-touring is not permitted. *Blvd. Sidi Mohammed ben Abdullah; tours daily except Friday at 9am, 10am, 11am and 2pm (sometimes at 2:30pm instead); $$.*

Modern Casablanca has its share of interesting attractions too. The heart of the city (called the **ville nouvelle**) spreads out around the huge and beautifully manicured **Place Mohammed V**. This square is surrounded by some of the best architecture in North Africa. Included in this group are the **town hall, Palace of Justice** and the **Cathédral du Sacré Coeur**. Also worth a visit is the **Central Market**, just a quarter-mile away along the Boulevard Mohammed V.

Shopping: The best places to shop are in the markets of the Medina. You will find just about everything, including the *fez*, the traditional red hat of Morocco. Bargaining is a way of life in these places.

Sports & Recreation: The better beaches are west of the city center along the Blvd. de la Corniche and in the suburb of Ain Diab, which lies a few miles past the Corniche. Buses go to the beaches and all the

way to Ain Diab, but you will be better off taking a taxi if your ship doesn't offer beach transportation.

Catania/Syracuse (Sicily), Italy

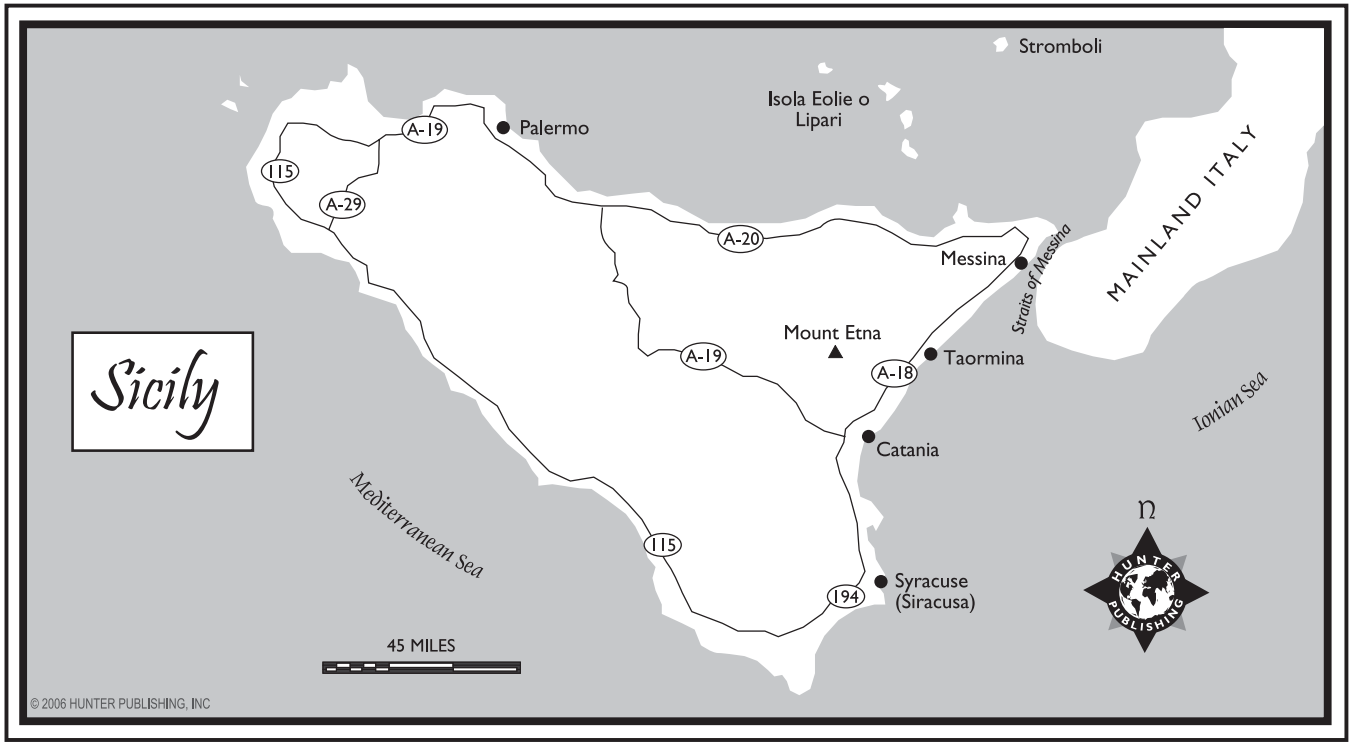
Although neither of these ports is called upon as often as Messina or Taormina, you will find some itineraries that do stop here, especially Catania. Also, you can easily reach either of them from the other two east coast Sicilian ports of call. Catania has more than 375,000 residents, making it Sicily's second-largest city. On the surface, it isn't the most attractive of cities. It's industrial, grimy and often run-down, but an attractive side is hidden beneath the rough exterior. There has been some renovation and rejuvenation in recent years and, regardless of how it looks, Catania features many interesting places to see. Although many visitors simply use it as a jumping-off point to visit other places, including Syracuse and Mt. Etna, it would be a mistake to just pass it by. Syracuse, near the southernmost tip of Sicily is about 40 miles from Catania. It's only about one-third the size of Catania but also has a lot to offer.

Arrival: The dock at Catania can accommodate ships with lengths up to 920 feet and 31-foot draft so only a few of the very largest of the mega-liners will have to use tenders to bring you to shore. It is a little more than a quarter-mile from the port to the center of town. The Syracuse dock will often require tenders but far fewer ships come here as compared to Catania. The city center in Syracuse is close to the dock.

Tourism Information Offices: Catania: Via Cimarosa 10-12, ☎ (095) 730-6211; Syracuse: Via Maestranza 33, ☎ (0931) 464-255.

Getting Around: Catania is another city that is spread out but has most most of the sights are in a relatively small area. Walking is the best way to get around. Syracuse is more compact, so there is little need for any transportation besides your own feet. A lot of visitors to these cities like to get out of town, and renting a car is a good idea. However, you may not be able to locate a rental agency that has cars with automatic transmissions. If that doesn't deter you, some of Sicily's mountainous roads might do so. In either of these cases, a wide variety of shore excursions will solve the problem.

Catania's One-Day Sightseeing Tour: In town, not at all far from the port, the central area around the **Piazza del Duomo** is the place to see. The cathedral itself is of relatively minor interest except for its generous use of marble on the exterior and the dungeon where St. Agata was tortured and murdered in 250 AD (*open daily, 8am-noon and 4pm-7pm*), but the **Fontana dell'Elefante** is a very unusual



PORTS OF CALL

fountain that sports an Egyptian obelisk riding on the back of an elephant. It is by the famous architect Vaccarini, whose works are on display throughout Catania, especially in this part of town. The ancient **Fontana Aretusa** sits on a natural spring and was once the primary water supply for the city. Another structure of interest because of its elaborate baroque façade is the **Palazzo del Muncipo**, Catania's town hall. *On the north side of Piazza del Duomo*.

Just off of the adjacent **Piazza Mazzini** are the busiest places in town – the fish and food markets. They are quite a sight (and the aroma is something too) but don't leave before getting a glimpse of the beautiful **Fontana dell'Amenano**. A little to the south of here is the eerie-looking **Castello Ursiono**. It's worth a brief visit, including taking a little time to see the **Museo Civico** inside the castle. *Open Monday-Saturday, 9am-1pm and 3pm-8pm; Sunday, 9am-3:30pm.* If you have time, there is one place north of the Piazza del Duomo that you might consider. This is the **Villa Bellini Gardens** on *Via Etnea*. The gardens aren't anything unusual but there is a great view of Mt. Etna. You should come here for that view if you aren't going to be visiting the mountain. There are also some scattered Roman ruins within the center city if you're interested, but none is especially significant.

Finally, along the waterfront on the Viale Africa at Piazza Giovanni XXIII, opposite the train station, is the unusual **Le Ciminiere**. This is Catania's best example of urban renewal. The ugly former sulphur refinery has been transformed into a cultural center. Right now it houses an exhibit on World War II, and many other permanent facilities are planned.

Syracuse's One-Day Sightseeing Tour*:* For visitors, the city can be neatly divided into two parts. The first is **Ortigia**, an island separated from the rest of the city by a narrow channel crossed by bridges. The rest of the city lies to the north of Ortigia. (The port, by the way, lies conveniently near the junction of these two sections.) Ortigia is the city's medieval quarter and just wandering its narrow and crooked streets can be quite rewarding. The **Museo Regionale di Pelazzo Bellomo** near the southern end of Ortigia has an excellent collection of sculpture and paintings spanning a period from the Middle Ages to contemporary works. *Via capodieci 14, open daily except Monday, 9am-1:30pm (also on Wednesday from 3pm-7pm); $.* Also of note in Ortigia is the **cathedral** (*duomo*), which is built on the original site of the Temple of Athena in the attractive **Piazza del Duomo**.

The other attractions are north of Ortigia. Without a doubt the star is the vast **Neapolis-Parco Archaeological Zone**. There are many ancient structures here in varying degrees of ruin, but some are in great shape. The highlight may be the brilliant white Greek Temple

that dates from the fifth century BC. Other structures are from both the Greek and Roman eras. *Viale Paradiso/Viale Augusto; open daily, 9am until two hours before sunset; $$.* The **Archaeology Museum** (*Museo Archeologico Paolo Orsi*) is also nearby. It explores the Greek colonial era. *Viale Teocrito; open daily except Monday, 9am-1pm; $$.*

While many visitors who go on excursions will head for Mt. Etna (which is detailed in the port description for Messina/Taormina, page 219), there are numerous other options that will be offered to you. One good one is the **Necropoli di Pantalica**, about 25 miles west of Syracuse. If you are asking yourself why you should go 25 miles when you can see ruins in town – I'll give you the answer. Necropoli di Pantalica is completely different. Built into the side of cliffs are 5,000 tombs, a staggering number. Even more amazing is that these were built between the 13th and eighth centuries BC – 2,800 to 3,300 years ago. If you want to get here on your own but didn't rent a car, buses do serve the area. However, it may be easier to negotiate a fare with a taxi driver.

Shopping: Catania has the better shopping of these two places as would be expected with its much larger size. However, neither of these cities has much that would be considered unusual or special. Traditional Sicilian items (see Messina/Taormina, page 219, for more information) are readily available.

Sports & Recreation: There are beaches not too far from both cities, but I wouldn't recommend either one.

- For details on **Civitavecchia**, Italy, see Rome, Italy, page 259.

Corfu (Ionian Islands), Greece

Corfu (*Kérkira* in Greek) is one of most northerly of the Ionian group of islands and is the second largest. It has a beautiful setting on Greece's Adriatic coast, just off the Greek mainland. Corfu measures some 40 miles from north to south and only four miles east to west (except at the very north, where it widens to about 10 miles). The main town and port has the same name as the island. Known for its beauty, the Corfu landscape is one of olive groves and cypress trees. Mountains, too, are part of the picture. The highest point on Corfu, **Mount Pantokratos**, measures in at 2,950 feet and offers splendid views.

Arrival: You will have to reach Corfu town via tender service, which will deliver you close to the center.

Greek Islands
BULGARIA
MACEDONIA
ALBANIA
Thessaloniki
TURKEY
Sea of Marmara
GREECE
Aegean Sea
Delphi
Patras
Athens
Piraeus
Corinth
Mt. Olympus
Ionian Sea
Rhodes
Heraklion (Iraklion)
CRETE
Mediterranean Sea
1. Corfu
2. Santorini
3. Mykonos/Délos
4. Rhodes
5. Khios
6. Lesbos
7. Limnos
130 MILES
HUNTER PUBLISHING
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Tourism Information Office: The former tourist office has been closed because of budgetary considerations. Unfortunately, this is a situation that will be encountered in several Greek ports of call. You can try the Tourist Police office at Samartri 4, off the Plateia San Rocco.

Getting Around: In-town sites can all be easily reached on foot, but other parts of the island offer some of its best sights and activities. To reach these you have the option of a guided shore excursion or using the reasonably efficient and inexpensive local bus system called KTEL. Taxis are also an option, but this will cost considerably more. Car rentals are another possibility. You'll even find some of the big international companies here, but getting an automatic transmission may be difficult or even impossible.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Wandering the crooked streets and exploring the shops is one way to pass the time in town. The central portion of Corfu is along the **Esplanade**, a former parade ground. The historically minded would find it rewarding to visit the local **Archaeological Museum**, south of the Old Town on P. Vraila. *Open daily except Monday, 8:30am-3pm; $.* The rest of the sights in Corfu town are nearer to the harbor in the Old Town. Your agenda here can begin with the beautiful interior of the **Church of Agios Spiridon**, *Agiou Spyridonos*. You can also take a look at the old and new **fortresses**, as well as the lovely parks and gardens that surround them. The fortresses are situated near one another along Corfu's northern edge. Of most interest is the **Neo Frourio** (or New Fortress). Its hilltop location offers beautiful views in addition to the palace ruins from the 15th century. *Open daily, 8:30am-7pm; $$.* All of these attractions are located in a part of town known as the **Spianada**. The **Museum of Asian Art** is an unexpected find in these parts. Featuring Japanese and Chinese collections, the museum occupies the former Palace of Saints Michael & George, the early 19th-century home of the British High Commissioner. *Kapodistria, open daily except Monday, 8:30am-3pm; $.* The **Byzantine Museum** is located in a church dating from the 13th century. The collection is quite good. *Arseniou, open daily except Monday, 8:30am-3pm.*

Exploring Farther Afield: Outside Corfu town are many more worthwhile places to see. North of town is **Mt. Pantokratos**. However, most of the good sights are south of town. The first of these is the **Mon Repos Villa**. This is the birthplace of Prince Philip (husband of Queen Elizabeth II). The house has been restored and furnished in period. The grounds are simply beautiful. *On the Kanoni Peninsula about three miles south of Corfu town. Open daily except Monday, 8:30am-3pm; $.* A few miles farther south is the different but equally

beautiful **Ahillon Palace**. This was the summer palace of the Queen of Austria in the late 19th century. *Open daily, 9am-7pm; $.*

Shopping: The shops in Corfu are numerous and you'll have no trouble finding a good selection of Greek handicrafts. However, this isn't the best of the Greek islands for shopping, especially when compared to places like Mykonos or Santorini, so it's a better idea to conserve your shopping budget for them, if your cruise goes to either island.

Sports & Recreation: Outside of Corfu town are several resort areas and excellent beaches. The nearest is at **Benitses**, which is only about six miles away. The nicest beaches, however, are all on the west coast. Most can be reached by public transportation if you're not taking a beach-oriented shore excursion. A form of recreation combined with sightseeing is to take a **glass-bottom boat trip** from the old port area. If you have children, then the very best recreational choice on all of Corfu island is **Aqualand**, a thoroughly modern water park with lots of get-wet rides and activities. It is six miles west of Corfu town in Agios Ioannis*. Open daily, 10am-6pm; $$$$.*

THE ISLANDS OF GREECE

Now that you've read about the first of many Greek islands that are popular ports of call, it's a good time to present this short geographical primer. The more than 300 Greek islands range from tiny rocky islets to quite large (over 3,000 square miles). In total, the islands represent more than 20% of the land area of Greece.

The largest group of islands (about two-thirds of the total) is the **Cyclades**. Derived from the Greek work for *circle*, the Cyclades are so-named because in ancient times the island of Delos (home of the Delian League) was in the center of an island group that formed, more or less, a circle. Lying to the east of the mainland, other important Cyclade islands are: Amorgós, Andros, Kéa, Milos, Mikonós, Náxos, Paros and Santorini (Thira). The small **North Sporades** group is situated to the north of the Cyclades.

The next largest group is the **Dodecanese**, which means "12 Islands" (although there are actually about 50). Situated near the coast of Turkey, the main Dodecanese islands are Rhodes (Rodos), Kos and Pátmos. All of these preceding groups are also collectively referred to as the **Aegean Islands** because they're located in the Aegean Sea. Some important islands that aren't part of the above groups but are still Aegean islands are Euboea, Khíos, Lésvos (Lesbos)

and Límnos, plus Crete, which is the most southerly island and the largest (Euboea is next in size).

Not all of Greece's islands are in the Aegean. The **Ionian Islands** are off the northwest coast of Greece in the Ionian Sea, which borders the **Adriatic Sea**. The main islands in this last group are Corfu (Kérkira), the most popular, Cephalonia (Kefallinía), Levkás and Zákinthos.

◆ For details on **Delos**, Greece, see Mykonos, Greece, page 225.

Dubrovnik, Croatia

This exquisite city on the Adriatic Sea has long been a popular vacation destination among Europeans, although it wasn't well known to American travelers until recently. The troubles in the Balkans had an adverse affect on tourism in the early 1990s when Croatia was fighting Serbia for its independence. Things are quite calm these days and it has once again become a place that can and should be visited. It is one of several possible ports of call along Croatia's **Dalmatian Coast**.

Arrival: Dubrovnik's Gruz Harbor along the street called Gruska Obala has five berths and terminal facilities that can accommodate most large cruise ships (those no more than 920 feet in length). The rare exceptions will have to anchor and provide tender service into the harbor. Once at the dock, you'll be about 1¼ miles from the gates to the old city. While the more ambitious traveler might decide on taking the half-hour walk, a short bus ride will deliver you to the city center and Old Dubrovnik. If your sightseeing is going to be confined to the city itself, then I recommend that it be done independently. Shore excursions are necessary only for travel to outlying areas.

Tourism Information Office: Placa, ☎ (020) 426 354.

Getting Around: Except for transportation to the Old Town itself, Dubrovnik is best explored on foot. The few places of interest that are somewhat off the beaten path can be reached by taxi. Later on, you'll also read about the ferry service to Lokrum Island. Buses and taxes can take you to the beaches.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: The eastern end of Dubrovnik is where you'll find the walled **Old Town**. Once you pass through the **Pile Gate** you enter an entirely different world, one where time seemingly stopped several centuries ago. The main thoroughfare,

the **Placa**, will bring you close to most of the major sights. In the square just beyond the gate is the pretty **Onofrio Fountain** that has occupied this spot since 1438. Pick up a map at the tourist office here. The **Franciscan Monastery & Museum** is a beautiful 14th-century Romanesque structure. Especially notable is the stunning cloister. *Placa 2, open daily, 9am-4pm; $.* At the far end of the Placa (only about a quarter-mile away) is the beautiful **Lu a Square**, where you can gaze upon the beautiful **Orlando Column**, which pre-dates the Orlando Fountain by a couple of decades. The square also boasts Dubrovnik's landmark **clock tower**. Also here are the 16th-century **Sponza Palace** and **St. Blase's Church**, an ornate Italian baroque-style structure. The Palace contains the **State Archives** featuring exquisite manuscripts in an ornate building. *Open Monday-Friday, 8am-4pm.* A short detour a couple of blocks north will bring you to the **Dominican Monastery**. This huge building has an excellent museum. *Sveti Dominika 4; open daily, 9am-5pm.* Continue south from St. Blase's on Pred Dvorom past the town hall to the **Rector's Palace**, which has been converted into a museum showing what life was like in 15th-century Dubrovnik. *Open daily except Sunday, 9am-noon; $.* A little farther along is the **Cathedral of the Assumption**, another baroque masterpiece. Of special interest is the **treasury**. *Open daily, 9am-7pm; $*. From there, head along Kneza Damjana Jude to a corner of the walled city and **Fort St. John**, now occupied by a so-so **aquarium**. *Open daily, 9am-6:30pm; $$.* Somewhat better is the adjacent **Maritime Museum**, which chronicles the role the sea has played here. *Open daily except Monday, 9am-1pm; $.*

This is a good time to begin your visit to Dubrovnik's highlight – the 1¼-mile-long **city walls**. The walls were constructed over a period of almost 400 years beginning way back in the 13th century. They are among the most impressive you'll encounter in the Mediterranean region, not only because of their excellent state of preservation, but because of their massiveness. In some places they exceed 75 feet in height. Most stunning are the almost 20 different towers and bastions. The views from the top of the walls are fantastic, providing the best vistas of the city and the Adriatic Sea. *Entry to the walls is from the Pile Gate; open daily, 9am-6:30pm; $*. Just outside the northeast end of the walled city via the **Ploce Gate** is an extension of the fortifications called **Fort Revelin**.

The only land-based view rivaling the one from the walls is that from **Srd Mountain**, which rises sharply from sea level to more than 1,300 feet. A winding road leads up to it and, unless you're on a guided tour, the best way to get there is by taxi. The fare won't be that much as it is under two miles from the Old City. Stunning views of Dubrovnik and its red roofs are also a sight to behold when seen from out on the water. So, depending upon your ship's arrival and depar-

ture times, do try to catch a glimpse of Dubrovnik on your way into or out of the port.

Dubrovnik sits in an isolated position at the southern end of Croatia's Dalmatian Coast, hemmed in by the sea, mountains and neighboring states of Bosnia and Serbia, neither of which can be termed "hot" spots for visitors. As a result, most shore excursions that do leave town just go up the coast a bit so, with so much to see in town, you're much better off spending your time in Dubrovnik itself. The only possible exception is a trip to **Lokrum Island**, with its gardens and monastery ruins. You could spend a small bundle on a guided excursion to Lokrum, but I suggest taking the hourly ferry from just outside the Old Town walls that can be reached via the gate at the eastern end Lu a Square. It makes for a pleasant quarter- to half-day trip and can be combined with an Old City sightseeing adventure, as long as your ship is spending a full day in port.

Shopping: Dubrovnik's many markets are delightful places to browse and shop, especially the one in the Old Town.

Sports & Recreation: In addition to its historic sites, Dubrovnik and the surrounding area has many fine beaches. **Ploce Beach** is just east of the Old Town, while many others are on the **Lapid Peninsula**, closer to the harbor. The aforementioned Lokrum Island is also a good place for beach lovers, and features one beach that allows nude bathing. Scuba diving is also a popular diversion. If your cruise ship is not offering a diving excursion they can put you in touch with some of the more reliable operators.

◆ For details on **Ephesus**, Turkey, see Kusadasi, Turkey, page 194.

Genoa, Italy

Long associated with the sea, Genoa is today the home port for MSC Italian Cruises and the headquarters of Costa, although the latter has most of its sailings from nearby Savona. Genoa has a long and glorious history. For many years it was an independent republic and was one of the most powerful states in the Mediterranean. Many people don't think of contemporary Genoa as a tourist attraction because this city of more than 650,000 people happens to be one of Italy's most heavily industrialized metropolitan areas. While there's no denying that, and a certain amount of grime that goes along with it, Genoa has numerous quality points of interest to offer the visitor. As a matter of fact, if this is a day port of call for you, I strongly recommend that you take advantage of what it has to offer rather than

heading for nearby Italian Riviera towns, especially if your cruise itinerary calls for other ports along the Rivieras of either France or Italy.

Arrival: Genoa's passenger ship terminals, the Ponte dei Mille and Ponte Andria Doria, were reconstructed in 1991 from the original "maritime station" and it is one of the largest, most modern and efficient cruise ship terminals in the world. It can accommodate up to five ships at one time, which means that you never have to tender. Located along the Via della Mercanzia, the port is more than a quarter-mile from the city center, but you can hop a bus or a taxi to whisk you there in just a few minutes. Walking isn't a difficult option, but you will have to go through an unattractive industrial and commercial area. It is safe to do so during the daytime.

Tourism Information Office: Although there will be an information booth at the port, the main tourist office has better services. It's in the Piazza Giacomo Matteotti in the center of the city; ☎ (010) 248 711.

Getting Around: There is no need for an organized shore excursion to take in the city's sights. This isn't necessarily the case should you opt to use Genoa as a jumping-off point for other places such as **Milan** (90 miles) or several communities along the **Italian Riviera** (such as **San Remo**) to the west or the **Ligurian coast** to the south. The Ligurian coast is a particularly beautiful area with many wonderful villages, including the oft-sketched Portofino. There are also trains going to San Remo and Portofino/La Spezia. If you wish to use this option, go to the Stazione Principe, close to the port at Piazza Acquaverde, for westward-bound trains. Towards Liguria, you can use either that station or the Stazione Brignole, Piazza Giuseppe Verdi, in the city center. There is frequent service and it's efficient. There is a comprehensive network of buses serving all parts of Genoa but unless you speak Italian you might face some confusion. Walking in the city center and old town is a delightful way to explore, and taxis come in handy when you get tired of walking, especially when it's time to head back to the ship!

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Unless indicated otherwise, all of Genoa's day tour attractions are in the city's central core, which is in a fairly limited area, so it is very manageable on foot. A good place to begin is right at the heart of things in the **Piazza de Ferrari** and the adjacent **Piazza Matteotti**. The former is an elegant square with impressive old buildings. The **Palazzo Ducale**, originally the seat of the Genoan government, is now used for exhibits and conventions, but you can still get a feel for the elaborate interior by walking inside and exploring its attractive atrium. There are many restaurants located there now. *Piazza Matteotti 9. There may be a charge when exhibits are in progress.* A block west of Piazza Matteotti by way of

Via di San Lorenzo is the beautiful 12th-century **Cattedrale di San Lorenzo**. This magnificent structure was built of local marble (both black and white) and the elaborate exterior façade is worth a detailed look to appreciate all of the details. The interior of the main portion of the cathedral isn't quite as marvelous, although the **Museo del Tesora** in the sacristy has some interesting items. The best feature is the **Capella del San Giovani Battista**, a lovely chapel. *Piazza San Lorenzo; open daily except Sunday, 9 am to 11 am and 3 pm-5:30 pm; $$.* A short walk west from here is a small section of the city's restored **walls**, but a far better example will be discussed later. Go back towards the Piazza Ferrari. Just off it is the **Church of San Matteo** (at Piazza San Mateo), which is worth a brief look. Then head north from Piazza Ferrari along the impressive and beautiful **Via Garibaldi**, lined on both sides with imposing structures, many of which were once palaces. Along this street are the **Palazzo Bianco** (White Palace) and **Palazzo Rosso** (Red Palace). Dating from, respectively, the 16th and 17th centuries, both palaces are now fine art galleries with works by European masters. *Via Garibaldi 11 & 18; both are open daily except Monday, 9 am to 7 pm (opens at 10 am on Saturday and Sunday); $ each.* Also along this street is the **Palazzo Doria Tursi**, the former palace of a wealthy Genoan family that now houses the city hall. It was originally built in 1564. *Via Garibaldi 9; open weekdays, hours vary.* To the east of this area is the oldest part of Genoa, known for its maze-like layout of narrow streets. This is where the history of the town seems to come to life. If you explore this area, a good map is essential (in fact, a map is useful as you tour all parts of the city). Continue on Garibaldi until it becomes Via Cairol. Go through Piazza della Nunziata and Via Balbi to the **Palazo Reale**. This former royal palace is home to a fine collection of Renaissance art. It also has outstanding terrace gardens. *Via Balbi 10. Open daily except Monday, 9 am to 7 pm (but to 1:30 pm on Tuesday and Wednesday); $$.* Not far from here is the **Galleria Nazionale di Palazzo Spinola**, another palace turned art museum. This one specializes in Renaissance artists. *Piazza di Pellicceria 1; open daily except Monday, 9 am to 8 pm (opens at 2 pm on Sunday); $$$. There is a combined admission ticket with the Palazo Reale that offers some savings.*

The area where the Spinola Gallery is located marks the beginning of the old town or old port, so wander over to the waterfront to visit the **Aquarium** (Acquario). This fine facility is one of the biggest in Europe (the largest according to Genoans but, then again, everyone measures these things differently). Most visitors spend their time in the dolphin area. This will be an essential part of your port time if you have children. *Ponte Spinola; open daily from 9:30 am. Closing time varies, but it is never earlier than 7:30 pm; $$$.* Along the waterfront

is what is perhaps Genoa's most unusual attraction – **Il Bigo** (The Americanization of the Italian language is apparently deliberate!) This weird structure hoists passengers in what can only be termed a cannister more than 600 feet up into the air to get a great view of the port and the city. It was designed by the famous architect Renzo Piano and those who are familiar with his work won't be surprised that it is so strange. Mr. Piano is definitely non-conformist. That can be said about his one foray into cruise ship design, too. The *Regal Princess* is his work and it always attracted some strange looks from those knowledgeable about cruise ship design. Anyhow, Il Bigo is something that children will also enjoy unless they're scared of heights. *Calata Cattaneo. Open daily except Monday, 10 am to 6 pm; $.* Also on the Calata Cattaneo is the **National Museum of the Antarctic** (Museo Nazionale dell'Antardide), an interesting waterfront facility about Antarctic exploration. *Open daily except Monday, 10:30 am to 6:30 pm; $$.*

It's likely that the sightseeing tour described above will fill up the entire day in Genoa for most people. For those who will have extra time in the city because it is their port of embarkation or debarkation, I suggest an excursion to one of the places mentioned at the outset. Should you have some more time as a day visitor or want to do something a little different than wandering through the city's historic sights and multitude of palaces-turned-art-museums, here's a a good alternative. Many areas of Genoa that are away from the port and downtown are very hilly (with elevations rising to as much as 1,600 feet). Residents regularly use any of a number of **funicular railways** that go up to the higher points. Besides being fun to ride, the funiculars provide excellent views of the city and port. But instead of just taking a ride on any funicular, try the one that leaves from Largo della Zecca (near the Piazza Nunziatta). It will take you up to the **Righi** neighborhood and a very long section of the city's old **walls**, which parallel a street called the Mura delle Chiappe. There are easy walking trails that lead to **Forte Sperone**, the only major fort that was part of the wall system that remains.

Shopping*:* Genoa has shops selling all sorts of goods in every price range, although no one would rank it with the greatest of Europe's shopping meccas. The main thoroughfare for shopping activity is Via XX Settembre, between the Piazza Ferrari and Via Fiume, the latter being just south of Piazza Giuseppe Verdi. The fun **Mercato Orientale** is along this stretch if you want to capture the real flavor of shopping Genoese style. There are numerous other markets held in various plazas but unlike the Mercato, which has regular hours, they are usually held at times which aren't likely to match your port time.

Sports & Recreation: Other than the usual sports facilities common in big cities, you'll have to head out to places along the Italian Riviera if you want the beach and other aspects of the great outdoors.

Gibraltar

This famous British enclave lies at the southernmost tip of Spain and is one of the two ancient Pillars of Hercules that marked the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea. Tiny Gibraltar (only 2.3 square miles) is an interesting place that has played a major role in European history. Long nicknamed "The Rock" by the English, Gibraltar's name is a corruption of the original Arabic name, *Jabal Tariq*, which means Mount of Tariq. Tariq was the name of the Muslim general who successfully invaded Spain in 711. Gibraltar has been under British rule since 1704. The Rock's silhouette is famous throughout the world. Hopefully, your ship's arrival will be in daylight and you'll be able to take in this wonderful sight as you approach. It is a limestone monolith that rises abruptly from the sea on the east side to a height of 1,396 feet. The slope on the west is much more gradual, creating the almost triangular shape seen so often in photographs.

About five million visitors come to tiny Gibraltar each year, mostly via the land crossing from Spain.

Arrival: Gibraltar's Cruise Line Terminal was completed in 1995 in what used to be a vacant warehouse. It can accommodate several large ships so the use of tenders to get to shore should not be necessary. Conveniently, it's only a 15-minute walk from the center of town. Transportation in the form of taxis and buses is also available should your cruise line not provide shuttle service.

Tourism Information Office: Duke of Kent House, 6 Cathedral Square, ☎ 749850.

Getting Around: Because of the location of the port and the compact nature of Gibraltar, guided tours aren't necessary; getting around on your own is a breeze. Walking around to take in the sights is absolutely the best way to go. However, you might want to consider taxis or local buses in some situations because of the steep terrain once you get away from the town center. The cable car, described later, is the most fun method of transportation and should be a part of any visit to Gibraltar.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: For such a small place, Gibraltar has a wealth of great attractions. Although one could easily spend two or even three days exploring Gibraltar, the amount of time

needed to see most of the important attractions is almost perfectly tailored to a full-day port of call.

The town of Gibraltar is centered around pretty Cathedral Square and its Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Trinity. As the square is the location of the helpful tourist office (where you can get detailed maps), it is the logical starting point for any tour. Also in the vicinity of the square are the Governor's Residence, where colorful changing of the guard ceremonies are sometimes held (but, unfortunately, they aren't likely to take place while you're in port), and the Casemates Square, where public executions used to take place. Cannons line the waterfront promenade and park. Just off Main Street on Bomb House Lane is the Gibraltar Museum and its fine collection of everything from cannon balls to things salvaged from shipwrecks. Housed in what was once a Moorish bath, the museum also has an excellent model of the Rock showing fortifications as they existed in the 18th century. Open daily except Sunday, 10 am until 6 pm *(till 2 pm on Saturday); $.*

Nearby are the **Alameda Gardens** – they are pretty but can be skipped if your time is limited. At the southern end of Main Street on either side of the **Southport Gate** you'll get a good view of the remains of the 16th-century walls that were built to defend against attacks by pirates.

The highlight of Gibraltar, however, is not the town but the area known as the **Upper Rock**. The easiest way to get there is via **cable car**, one of Gibraltar's most famous and popular attractions. The scenic trip to the top is a great little ride. There is an intermediate station midway where you can get off to do a little further exploration. I recommend taking the car up to the top station and later wandering on down to the middle station, where you can jump back on for the trip to the bottom. The views from the top are awesome and include all of Gibraltar, nearby Spain, and (on clear days) the coast of North Africa. Near the middle station you'll see the **Ape's Den**, where more than 150 Barbary apes reside on the cliff. They're Europe's only native monkeys. Legend has it that as long as they remain on the Rock, Gibraltar will remain English. If you're here at either eight in the morning or four in the afternoon, be sure to watch the monkeys being fed. Along the Upper Rock's many walking paths is **St. Michael's Cave**, the largest of Gibraltar's natural caverns. It is filled with beautiful formations, including stalactites and stalagmites. Evening concerts are held in one portion of the caverns. Experienced cave explorers can get permission (inquire at the ticket office) to climb around in the Lower Caves. In the opposite direction from the middle station (and a lengthy walk if you choose to go by foot) are the **Galleries & Great Siege Tunnel**. Unlike the natural caverns just

described, this is where British Army engineers blasted fortifications out of the limestone. The interior is now a wax museum that will give you an idea of what life was like for the soldiers who manned the huge gun emplacements that once occupied this site. A few of the guns are still in place. Nearby are the remains of a **Moorish Castle** that can be entered. It is sometimes referred to as the **Tower of Homage** because practically all that is left is one large tower. There is also a **Military Heritage Museum** here. All of these attractions are located in what is called the Upper Nature Reserve. *Hours for all attractions in the Upper Nature Reserve are daily, 9:30 am to 6:30 pm; $$$ is the all-inclusive admission for every Upper Nature Reserve attraction. Additional $$$ for round-trip cable car fare, which operates daily, 9:30 am to 5:15 pm. If you come down from the Upper Reserve after that time you'll have to walk down or take a taxi.*

No tour of Gibraltar would be complete without a drive around the Rock and you don't have to sign up for a shore excursion to do so. The cheapest way is to hire a taxi (beating the price of both excursions and renting a car). On the lower road by the sea is **Nelson's Anchorage** and its 100-ton gun installation, which can fire a one-ton shell that travels for almost nine miles. Heading south from the town to the bottom of Gibraltar, you'll soon reach **Europa Point** (a lighthouse marks the spot). Nearby is the beautiful **Ibriham Mosque**. While the drive around doesn't have the multitude of sights of the town or Upper Nature Reserve, it does give you a feel for the enclave as well as splendid views of different portions of the Rock.

If you do decide to take a guided excursion then it's best to do something that you can't experience on your own. An excellent choice is the approximately two-hour **boat ride** around Gibraltar. You'll likely see various species of dolphins. Although you can sign up for these trips in town, it is wiser to make arrangements through your ship's excursion office because it will fit better into your available time.

Shopping: **Main Street** is the primary commercial thoroughfare in Gibraltar. It is always crowded with residents and visitors. There is a wide variety of stores selling just about anything you could want. Prices vary from store to store so do shop around. The atmosphere is busy, almost boisterous. There are many places to eat (including English pubs) along Main Street, so you don't have to go back to your ship for lunch.

Sports & Recreation: The major recreational activities are connected with the sea. **Sailing** is extremely popular and there are all sorts of cruises lasting up to a few hours; many feature dolphin-watching. **Governor's Beach** is the only place where you can soak up the sun, but it isn't such a great beach. Although it doesn't exactly fit

in the category of Sports & Recreation, Gibraltar has a **casino**. It opens at 9 pm, and unless your ship is leaving very late, it won't be of any use to you.

Heraklion (Crete), Greece

It's unfortunate that more cruise ships don't make a call at Heraklion (alternatively known as Iráklion or Iraklio) because it, as well as several other places on Crete, has many wonders and rarely disappoints visitors. The best choice of itineraries to Crete is from the European cruise lines. One of the reasons for the relative lack of cruises going to Crete is that it's out of the way from other Greek islands, which makes scheduling more difficult.

Crete is 150 miles long and from six to 35 miles wide. It is the largest of the Greek islands and ranks fifth largest among all Mediterranean islands. Crete was the center of the Minoan civilization, which flourished between 3000 and 1200 BC. Excavations have shown that it was on a par culturally with the civilizations of both Egypt and Mesopotamia. Present-day Heraklion is Crete's major port and it is conveniently located near the major sites of Minoan culture, including its ancient capital. Heraklion is the fifth most populous city in Greece.

Arrival: Many cruise ships will be able to dock in the harbor, but extra-large vessels will have to rely on tenders. The New Harbor – where you'll first touch land regardless of whether you dock or tender – is within walking distance of many of the downtown points of interest.

Tourism Information Office: The Greek National Tourist Office branch has been closed, but you might be able to get information from the Tourist Police office at Dikeosynis 10, ☎ (2810) 283 190.

Getting Around: Within Heraklion it is best to explore on foot. Because of the maze of streets in the old part of the city, it is a good idea to arm yourself with a detailed map. For places out of town, the shore excursion office of your ship is the place to sign up because distances on Crete are greater than on most Greek islands and a taxi might cost you a small fortune. Rental cars are scare and expensive.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Popular guided shore excursions from Heraklion visit traditional towns, various Minoan sites, and take in the natural beauty of the island. This includes mountains, plateaus and gorges, along with two sites that are of great importance in Greek mythology. The first is **Mount Idi**, where the great god Zeus was said to have been born. The second is **Dikteon Cave** where, according to ancient beliefs, the infant god Zeus was hidden from destruction by a vengeful Cronos. *Located just west of the village of*

Psyhro; open daily, 8 am to 4 pm; $$. But by far the most popular excursion is to the primary Minoan site of **Knossos**. While almost all out-of-town attractions from Heraklion are best done by guided shore excursion, Knossos is the one place that *can* be reached on your own. It is five miles southeast of Heraklion and is the best preserved of all Minoan sites. You can reach it by taking Bus #2 from the station near the New Harbor. Departures are every 10 minutes or so. If visiting on your own, plan on spending at least a few hours here. The **Palace of Knossos** is the source of the myth about the Minotaur, the part-human, part-animal beast that resided in the labyrinth beneath the palace. The ruins of Knossos were first discovered in 1900 and the reconstruction has included the palace itself, along with several courtyards, royal apartments, and baths. It is a wonderful place to explore, with beautiful frescoes depicting various aspects of Minoan civilization. *Open daily, 8 am to 7 pm; $$.* Farther away (38 miles southwest of Heraklion) is the second-most important Minoan site. The **Palace of Phaestos** predates even the one at Knossos. It isn't as large, nor has it been as well excavated. For some, that makes it more special. Finding excursions that go to Phaestos isn't always an easy task.

Not all of the attractions are outside of Heraklion. You can easily spend a half-day or more touring the city. It's only about a quarter-mile from the New Harbor to the center of the city, which sits to the east of a remaining section of the old **city walls**, built by the Venetians. Inside one of its bastions is the tomb of Kikos Kazantzakis, Crete's most famous author. The **Archaeological Museum** is just inside the walls and should, time permitting, be seen as a prelude to the palace at Knossos since it contains many finds from that site and the Minoan era in general. It is the premier facility in the world when it comes to Minoan civilization. *Xanthoudidou, north of the Plateia Eleftherias; open daily, 8 am to 7 pm (opens at 12:30 pm on Monday); $$.* Not too far east from the museum in the attractive **Venetian Plaza** (Plateia Vinezelou) is the **Basilica of San Marco**, a 13th-century church; and the pretty **Morosini Fountain**. The Plateia Vinezelou is the city's main square. Immediately north of the square is the stately **Venetian Lodge** or Loggia, *25 Avgoustou.* It was once a club for aristocratic gentlemen and is one of many buildings from the era when Crete was ruled by the Venetian Republic. Today, it serves as the city hall. From here, head up towards the waterfront and the **Historical Museum of Crete**. This fine museum explores the history of the island from Byzantine times all the way up to the present day. *Lysimahou Kalokerinou 7; open Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm, and on Saturday, 9 am to 2 pm; $.* Nearby, overlooking the Old Harbor, is the **Venetian Fortress**. *Koules; open daily except Monday, 8:30 am to 3 pm; $.*

Shopping: There is nothing particularly special about shopping in Heraklion. If you must have something from every port then try the area around the Plateia Venezilou or the Plateia Eletherias. The latter is farther from the city center toward the walls.

Sports & Recreation: The island of Crete has many fine beaches. They are mainly on the south and western coasts of the island – too far from Heraklion to make them convenient destinations. The same can be said for the island's popular diving spots.

Hvar/Korkula, Croatia

Hvar and Korcula are two lovely sunny islands in the Adriatic Sea off the coast of Croatia's Dalmatia region. Internationally, these islands aren't well known, except to savvy European tourists looking for a good buy. The Dinaric Alps on the mainland provide splendid distant views.

Arrival: The ports are small and transfer into town will likely be by tender. Korcula, for example, can only dock ships under 560 feet, which excludes just about everything except luxury yachts. Once ashore you are in easy walking distance to the heart of the main towns (which have the same name as their respective islands).

Tourism Information Offices: Trg Sveti Stjepana (main square), Hvar, ☎ (021) 741 059; adjacent to Hotel Korcula, at the western harbor, Korcula, ☎ (020) 715 701.

Getting Around: The major town on each island is best suited to a walking tour. Although neither island is that large, if you do decide to explore on your own it is advisable to hire a taxi rather than to use the local bus service as few people speak English. Guided excursions are the best way to see the islands if heading out of town.

Korcula's One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Korcula is the larger of the two islands and outside of the main town it offers scenic beaches and pretty winding roads. Both islands have a long and narrow shape and are separated from one another by a channel approximately 20 miles wide. Cruise ships will call on one island and local ferry schedules are such that you can't plan on visiting the other in a single-day visit. Korcula is another fine example of a Dalmatian medieval settlement. It is believed that Marco Polo was born here, in one of the towers. In the center of town is **St. Mark's Cathedral**, an outstanding example of Gothic architecture, and the adjacent **Treasury**, located in an abbey dating from the 14th century. *Trg Sv Marka Statua 1214; open daily, 10 am to noon and 5 pm to 7 pm; treasury closed on Sunday.* Opposite the abbey is **Gabriellis Palace** and its

splendid local history museum. *Open daily except Sunday, 9 am to 1 pm, and 5 pm to 7 pm; $.* Also in the square is the **Cathedral of St. Stjepan**. Elswhere in town and of interest are the remains of the city walls, which you can follow, perhaps returning by the shore. The **Bishop's Treasury** has some lovely religious items. *Riznica, open daily, 9 am to noon.*

Hvar's One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Occupying a thumb-shaped peninsula, the medieval atmosphere of Hvar is the town's greatest attraction. Just wandering around its streets or along the attractive seafront promenade is a great way to spend a couple of hours. Highlights include the massive Gothic-style **Arsenal**, Trg Sveti Stjepana, with its 17th-century theater and two monasteries at the east and southeastern ends of town. The main town square where the Arsenal is found is one of the largest in this part of Europe. The **Dominican monastery** has imposing ruins and a decent museum of archaeology (erratic hours). The **Franciscan monastery,** on the south side of the harbor, has an excellent collection of paintings. *Open daily, 9 am to noon and 5 pm to 7 pm.* There are some remains of the town's original walls, towers and gates. Although no longer overly impressive, they make for a very pleasing picture. Take some time to climb the hill to the 16th-century **Venetian Fortress** (Fortress Spanjol) that overlooks the town. Although there isn't much to see in the fortress itself, the view from the hilltop makes the trip worthwhile. *Reached from the north town gate by proceeding through the park.* The island has many small, pretty caves that are interesting to explore via guided tours.

Shopping*:* Neither island is known for its shopping opportunities, but there are local shops and markets along the main tourist paths where you can find regional handicrafts at reasonable prices.

Sports & Recreation: Of the two islands, Hvar has the better recreational facilities, including nicer beaches and pretty good diving.

Istanbul, Turkey

Few cities in the world have a more colorful and exciting history than Istanbul. Strategically located between the Black and Mediterranean Seas, it has long figured in struggles for empire. As Constantinople, it was the capital of the Byzantine Empire and carried on many of the traditions of that empire long after it had fallen in the west. The Ottoman sultans were the successors to the splendors of what would eventually be renamed Istanbul, and their transformation of the city from Eastern Orthodox into an Islamic one is evident wherever you go. Although modern-day Turkey has moved the capital to Ankara,

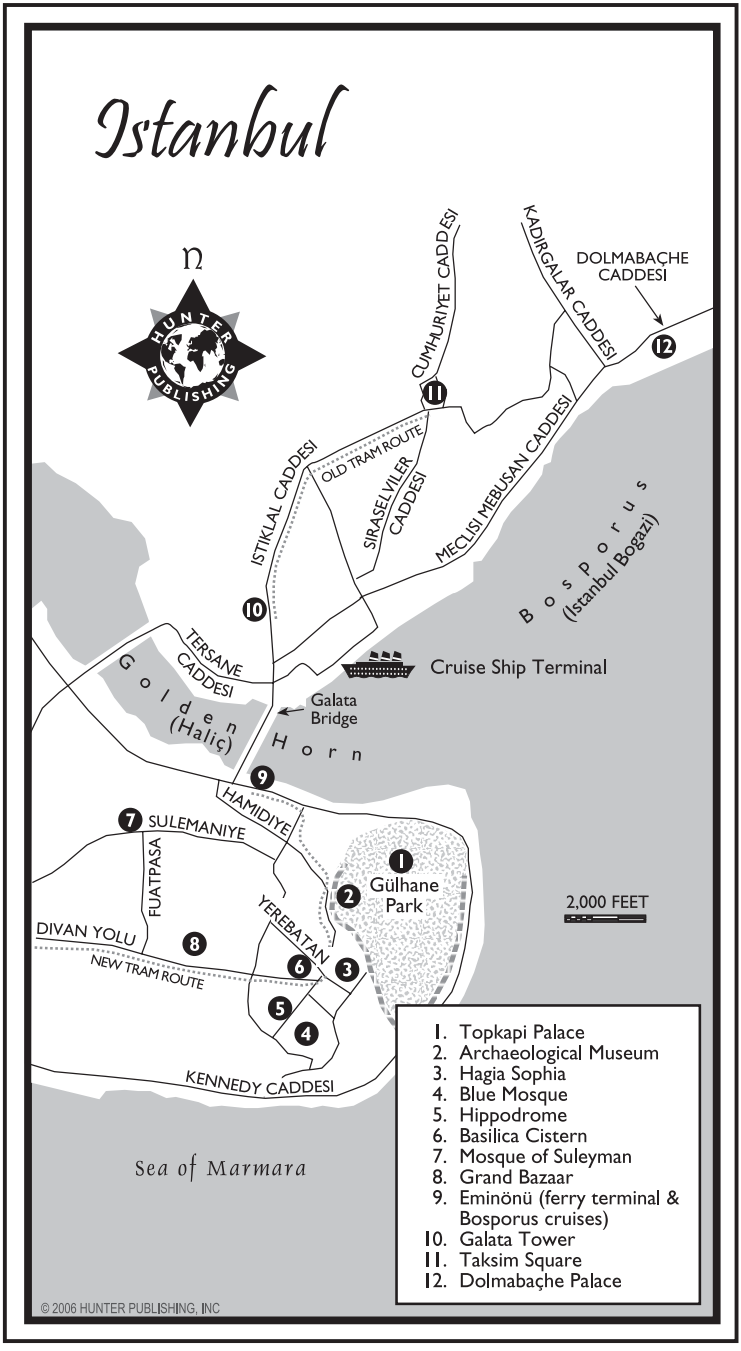
Istanbul is still the epitome of this nation and its history and culture. It is also symbolic of its move towards the west. Here, women in mini-skirts share the same sidewalks with women covered from head to toe in traditional Islamic garments and the sounds of the call to prayer at countless mosques vie with the blaring boom boxes of equally countless street vendors. At times disconcerting, the cultural shock usually winds up being a sheer delight and a valuable experience for the American visitor.

Arrival: Your cruise ship will tie up in port and tenders are never required. Karaköy Interntional Maritime Passenger Terminal is not far from the center of the historic city (you can see it clearly across the bustling Golden Horn with its constant boat traffic) or the commercial center of the Taksim Square area. Day visitors can choose to walk along the waterfront and cross the Galata Bridge into the heart of the city. However, you will wind up doing a lot of walking as you explore Istanbul, so your best choice might be to take a taxi to your initial destination. This is likely to be either Taksim or Sultanahmet and the fare should be around $5-$8 for Taksim and less than $10 for Sultanahmet. For either location, negotiate before you get inside the cab and you might get a better price.

Tourism Information Office: At the cruise ship terminal, Karaköy Yoku Salonu, ☎ (0212) 249 5776; in the heart of Sultanahmet on Divan Yolu Caddesi just off the large Sultanahmet Meydani plaza, ☎ (0212) 518 8754; or at the Sirkeci Train Station (on the tram line to Sultanahmet), ☎ (0212) 511 5811.

Getting Around: Istanbul has a variety of public transportation conveyances that can be used to supplement walking. Without advance knowledge it is difficult to use the bus system. Another reason to avoid it are the sardine-like conditions often encountered. However, the modern tram system is excellent, although limited in its scope, and there is a "mini-subway," which will be described in the sightseeing section. For places that are not in the city center, shared "jitney" vans called a *dolmu* ride on prescribed routes and are also a good means of getting around for relatively low cost. Day visitors are likely only to have enough time to see the major sights of the geographically small but attraction-packed Sultanahmet area. Therefore, except for getting to and from there, walking is best. Istanbul is a city that invites walking in order to truly experience the flavor of this incredibly crowded and always busy metropolis of more than 10 million people. I would avoid taking expensive guided tours unless you plan to go farther afield. Get a good map from the tourist office and negotiate Istanbul's streets on your own.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: The city's fascinating history comes alive in the **Sultanahmet** area, a small point of land (under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Cruise Ship Terminal
Galata Bridge
HAMIDIYE
SULEMANIYE
FUATPASA
Gülhane Park
YEREBATAN
DIVAN YOLU
NEW TRAM ROUTE
KENNEDY CADDESI
Sea of Marmara
2,000 FEET
1. Topkapi Palace
2. Archaeological Museum
3. Hagia Sophia
4. Blue Mosque
5. Hippodrome
6. Basilica Cistern
7. Mosque of Suleyman
8. Grand Bazaar
9. Eminönü (ferry terminal & Bosporus cruises)
10. Galata Tower
11. Taksim Square
12. Dolmabaçhe Palace
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two square miles) formed by the junction of three important bodies of water: the Golden Horn, the Bosporus, and the Sea of Marmara. This is the heart of the city for visitors, especially those who will have only a day or even two to explore. In fact, everything except the last attraction of this suggested one-day highlight tour is confined to the Sultanahmet section, and even the lone exception isn't far from it.

The tour begins with what will probably be the undisputed highlight of Sultanahment and Istanbul, **Topkapi Palace**. From here, powerful Ottoman sultans directed their empire. Before going inside the extensive palace grounds you will see the beautiful **Ahmet III Fountain**. This is a fine example of Istanbul's fountains, which are unlike their European counterparts. Originally designed as a place to wash the hands and feet before entering a mosque (or palace), the fountain lies underneath an exquisitely decorated "dome" and dispenses water from taps around its edge. The vast Topkapi Palace complex is entered through an impressive gate and consists of many different structures (succeeding sultans each contributed their own additions). The buildings, most of which can be visited, surround four different large and attractive park-like courtyards. The interiors range from simple to ornate and there are several collections of jewelry and other stunning possessions of the sultans. The Treasury is especially noteworthy when it comes to relics of the Sultans. The most popular portion of the palace, however, is the **harem**. This section can be seen only via guided tour; the demand is high, so try to get there early. Although the surroundings of the harem are exquisite, the narratives of the guides who explain life in the harem are equally fascinating. You'll probably learn a lot, because much of what Americans think of about a harem is not based on facts. The cost of visiting Topkapi has gotten very high in the past few years, but it is worth every cent. You wouldn't go wrong by spending half a day or even more here, but with limited time you should try to get through the high points in no more than three hours. *Enter through the Imperial Gate off of Soukçe me Sokak in Gülhane Park; open daily except Tuesday, 9:30 am to 5 pm (harem from 9:30 am to noon and 1 to 3:30 pm); $$ plus $$ additional each for the harem and Treasury.* Topkapi itself sits behind a wall in a large park. On the west edge of the park are the excellent **Archaeological Museums** that offer a huge collection of artifacts. Displays are housed in several buildings and among the highlights are the sarcophagus of Alexander the Great and a complete temple to Athena. The civilizations of Sumeria, Babylonia, Assyria and the Hittite Empire are all explored. *Gülhane Park to the southwest of Topkapi*; *open daily except Monday, 9:30 am to 5 pm (Tiled Pavilion closes at noon; Ancient & Oriental Arts section is open 1 to 5 pm); $.*

From the Imperial Gate to Topkapi it is only a couple of short blocks south to the main square in Sultanamet, the **Sultanahmet Meydani**. The most imposing structure around the square is the massive **Hagia Sophia** (officially known as the **Aya Sofya Museum**). Originally built as a Christian church, it was converted to a mosque before more recently becoming a museum. The fourth-century structure isn't particularly beautiful, but it is sure to impress with its oversized architecture. The dome, for example, is more than 175 feet high. Be sure to climb the several flights of stairs to the balcony for the best view (and a true feeling of just how big this place is). Don't leave the upstairs before seeing the mosaic tile art on some of the walls. *Open daily except Monday, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm; $$-$$$.* Upon leaving Hagia Sophia, cross the pleasant park-like setting of Sultanahmet Meydani to the east side, where you'll find the government-owned **Turkish Handwoven Carpets Center**. It is housed in the former Hurrem Sultan baths (also known as the Baths of Roxellana) and is of great architectural interest. This is a good place to look at authentic Turkish carpets without being hassled to buy, but more about that in the shopping section. *Open daily except Tuesday, 9:30 am to 5 pm.*

Back on the opposite side of the square, the park that borders Hagia Sophia blends into the Hippodrome. This is where you'll find the Imperial Sultanahmet Mosque, known to everyone as the **Blue Mosque** because of the many blue tiles found throughout the interior. If you have time to see only one active mosque while in Istanbul, this should be it. The arrangement of all mosques (including the courtyards, ablutions fountains, and interior) is similar. However, this one is especially beautiful. As a sign of respect, dress modestly. *Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm, but closed during prayer times. Try to avoid Friday altogether if you can.* During the days of Constantine, the **Hippodrome** was once the site of a vast stadium. Today the park-like setting is now a good place to take a break from walking. Of interest along the spacious Hippodrome are a few sights that will only take a couple minutes to see – the **Obelisk of Theodosius** and the **Column of Constantine**.

A block north of the Hippodrome at the intersection of Yerebatan Caddesi is the **Basilica Cistern** (Yerebatim Sarnici). More than 300 graceful columns (many elaborately decorated) support the vaulted ceiling of this former reservoir beneath the streets of Sultanahmet. The dim lights and music make it fun to visit, although little children might be spooked. The cistern was built in the first half of the sixth century. *Yerebatim Caddesi 13; open daily, 9 am to 4:30 pm; $.* Even on a single day in Istanbul you must make time to see the Covered Bazaar (Karpali Çari). This is the largest of Istanbul's many bazaars and is more commonly known as the **Grand Bazaar**. Located in the Beyazit neighborhood, just west of Sultanahmet, you can walk here,

but it's quicker and easier to take the modern tram (called the New Tram) for a couple of stops from the Sultanahmet station to the Beyazit or Üniversite stations. The Grand Bazaar is a world in itself, with more than 4,000 merchants under one roof. It is a mélange of colors and sounds, a feast for the senses. Don't mind the constant attention you get from vendors, which are no worse than those on the streets. You'll get used to it. If not interested, a polite "no thanks" will do. Keep walking. See the shopping section for details. *Yeniceriler Caddesi; open daily except Sunday, 8:30 am to 6:30 pm.*

Additional Sights: You could easily spend a week discovering the treasures of Istanbul. This section is for those who are lucky enough to have more than a day here. Starting in Sultanahmet, pay a visit to the **Museum of Turkish & Islamic Art**. This fine museum is housed in the former Ibrahim Pasa Palace and is located near the Hippodrome. *Atmeydani 46, on the west side of the Hippodrome; open daily except Monday, 9:30 am to 5:30 pm; $.* In Beyazit, there are two large mosques that you might want to add to your inventory. These are the **Yeni Camii**, or New Mosque *(west end of Eminönü)* and the cavernous **Sülemaniye Mosque** *(Sifahane Sokak, adjacent to the university)*. Both are closed to visitors at prayer times. The area between these two houses of worship is filled with a huge outdoor market, and there's another indoor market adjacent to the New Mosque. The indoor/outdoor **Spice Bazaar** is officially called the Egyptian Bazaar. You can smell it before you can see it. Although food items are the primary merchandise here, you can find a little of everything. *Hamidiye Caddesi; open daily except Sunday, 8:30 am to 6:30 pm.* West of Beyazit are a couple of attractions for those with significant extra time. The **Bozdan Aqueduct**, built by the Roman emperor Valens, allows traffic to pass beneath its arches. Farther out towards the western end of the city are what is left of Istanbul's **city walls**. There are also several palace ruins along the walls.

North of the Galata Bridge is the **Taksim** area, the new Istanbul and its commercial hub. The **Tünel** is a one-stop underground railway that you can use to connect from the north end of the bridge to the so-called **Old Tram**, which clickety-clacks its way up the **Istikla Caddesi**, one of Istanbul's busiest shopping streets and now a pedestrian-only thoroughfare. Also of interest in this area is the **Galata Tower**, which was built by the Genoese when this part of the city was reserved for foreigners on orders of the Sultan. There are decent views from the top. *Gulata Kulesi Sokak; open daily, 9 am to 8 pm; $.* At night, the top of the tower turns into one of the city's most popular clubs. The old tram ends at **Taksim Square**, a major hub for buses and thousands of commuters and busy at all times. The center of the square boasts the large **Republic Monument**.

Somewhat beyond Taksim along the Bosporus waterfront is a series of palaces. The first and best is the **Dolmabahçe Palace**, which was built in a more Western style to rival the palaces of Europe. It isn't nearly as old as most of the other sights in Istanbul. The palace can be seen only by guided tour and its perfectly symmetrical interior layout contains many beautiful rooms and exquisite furnishings. There are actually two separate tours. Both visit many public areas but diverge when it comes to the living quarters. One tour does the men's quarters, while the other does the family quarters. Each tour takes about an hour so how much you do depends upon your schedule. If you do have additional time in Istanbul beyond the basic one-day tour, this should be one of your first priorities. *Dolmabahçe Caddesi; open daily except Monday and Thursday, 9 am to 3 pm. Subject to closures for official events; $$ for each tour with a combined ticket offering a discount off the total price.*

Not far away is **Yildiz Palace**, which now contains the **City History Museum**. The palace also has very attractive gardens. *Çira an Caddesi; open Wednesday through Sunday, 9 am to 4 pm; $.* Back towards Taksim and then north on the busy Cumhuriyet Caddesi is the large **Military Museum**, or Askeri Müze, which has an outstanding collection of items from all eras of Ottoman and Turkish history. If you enjoy this kind of facility, be here at 3 pm and you're in for a special treat. A Turkish military band, called the **Janissary Band**, dressed in traditional colorful garb, will entertain you with a performance of music and marching. The theater's back wall opens up so that even though you're inside the building and protected from the elements, much of the action takes place on the outside. The performance lasts for one hour. *Cumhuriyet Caddesi; open Wednesday through Sunday, 9 am to 5 pm; $. Janissary Band performance is included in museum admission price.*

No trip to Istanbul is really complete until you've taken a boat ride on the **Bosporus**. There are numerous options (including fancy boats with fancy prices specifically designed for the well-heeled tourist), but the best way to proceed is to head to Eminönü dock at the south end of the Galata Bridge and take the tourist ferry. During your ride on the Bosporus (which is sometimes seen written as Bosphorus or Istanbul Boazi in Turkish), you'll see the Golden Horn and the busy harbor, you'll pass under modern suspension bridges and see fortresses, palaces and stately homes along both sides of this waterway that separates Europe from Asia. This can be a trip for a full day, an afternoon or just a couple of hours. You don't have to take the boat all the way to the end or even take the boat back at all. If you're in a hurry, get off at just about any stop on the European side and hop a *dolmu* back to Taksim. If you want to make a full day of it, you can get off the ferry at one or more stops to do some further exploration

and re-board a later boat. The ferry leaves daily at 10:30 am and 1:30 pm for sure, but there are generally two more departures per day during the summer. *Pier 5, Eminönü; $$.*

Outside the Istanbul area: Visiting other parts of Turkey before or after your cruise is usually important for passengers who have an embarkation in Istanbul. Nearby destinations along the south and north side of the Dardanelles are the site of **Ancient Troy** and the **Gallipoli Battlefield**. Both of these make good day-trips. (Troy can also be seen on a port call for ships that stop at Çanakkale, and is described under that port.) Gallipoli, site of a major World War I campaign, is a solemn place of monuments and museums. It will no doubt thrill military historians but few others. There are also far better places to go to, although they're much farther away. Much of what follows is available via multi-day tours often available through your cruise line, but you can get them cheaper booking independently through travel agents in the United States or in Turkey. The capital city of **Ankara** is a mostly modern metropolis, although there are some ancient ruins here as well. Of most interest are the **Archaeological Museum** and the inspiring **Atatürk Memorial**, the mausoleum of the first president of modern Turkey. If you have as much as three days to spare, the very best place you can visit is the ancient region of **Cappadocia**. This fascinating place has something for everyone – beautiful and often weird scenery in the form of eroded "fairy chimneys," churches and even homes carved into the soft rock of these formations (especially notable is the world-class Goreme Open Air Museum); traditional Turkish towns where you can see pottery being made (Avanos pottery is among the best, and you can buy it inexpensively); carpet factories and much, much more.

Shopping: The items most likely to pique your interest are Turkish carpets, handicrafts, silk fashions and all types of leather goods. The selection is vast and so is the range of prices. When shopping for very expensive items, especially carpets, you should consider purchasing at a government carpet shop because there is less hassle and the prices are decent. Shipping will be arranged for large items. The various bazaars are great to see, and this is where serious shoppers should head. Of course, the **Grand Bazaar** has the greatest variety of goods to offer. Remember that prices are *never* final in the bazaar. Always haggle. Don't buy until you've compared prices with other vendors selling the same goods. After a while you might even enjoy it, but you'll always wonder if you could have done better! You'll be hounded on the streets of Istanbul by vendors (especially youngsters) selling everything from socks and underwear to jewelry. It's best to ignore them as much as possible. If you show any interest at all they'll follow you for blocks and you'll wind up buying something you don't really need or want just to get rid of them. To avoid most

street vendors and the downsides of bargaining, you can opt to shop in more traditional stores where the prices are fixed (more or less). The entire pedestrian street known as the Istikial Caddesi, from the Tünel through Taksim Square, is a shopper's paradise of sorts. You'll find shops selling every type of item from all over the world. Stores range from moderate priced to upscale.

Sports & Recreation: Istanbul is not a recreational center (unless you consider discos and other nightlife recreation – the city has plenty of them). There are some beaches within a reasonable distance, but these aren't very good and they're so crowded you'll have trouble finding your place in the sun. Visitors to Turkey frequently want to take advantage of the **Turkish bath** experience and Istanbul is the place to do it. The facilities are numerous and range from simple to extravagant. Some of the better ones are historic and have been providing this service for a very long time. Others are aimed mostly at tourists and don't offer an authentic experience. If you want a true Turkish bath, consult the tourist office for suggestions. If you are staying overnight in Istanbul, the concierge staff at the better hotels will be able to help you select a good place. Some of these hotels even have their own baths.

Katákalon, Greece

It's probably safe to say that most Americans have never heard of this port. Given how small it is and how little there is in town, that's not surprising. So how come that in the last few years a number of major cruise lines seem to have suddenly "discovered" it? Well, there's a good reason: This tiny and unheralded mainland port is the most convenient gateway for cruise ship passengers to reach one of the most important of the major ancient Greek sites, Olympia. And, for those interested in ancient history and the culture of the Olympic Games, it's reason enough to come here!

Arrival: All passengers arriving in Katákalon will do so by tender.

Tourism Information Office: There is no tourist information office in town and you don't need one. Should you travel to Olympia on your own, there is an office in that town on Praxitelous Kondyli, just a short walk from the ancient ruins, ☎ (2624) 023 100.

Getting Around: If you get off the ship then you're almost certainly going to be taking a shore excursion to Olympia. Since local transportation and car rentals are fairly limited in this generally rural area, I encourage you to take one of the cruise line's guided shore excursions.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Time permitting, before or after your trip to the ancient site, you can easily walk around Katákalon. Although there are no specific sights of note, the town has a picturesque coastal setting and a quaint charm. But let's devote our attention to **Olympia**. This site is famous as the original home of the Olympic Games. The first one (776 BC) was instituted in honor of Zeus, the principal deity of the ancient Greeks. The event grew in importance to the point where warring city states suspended their fighting when the games were on. Most of the ruins you see today date from the fifth century. The site is impressive (and made all the more so because of its dramatic mountain location). Despite that, if you have seen Delphi, for example, you might be a little disappointed in Olympia. While here you can visit the fine **Museum of the Olympic Games**, located in the modern town of Olympia, rather than at the archaeological site. This is only a few hundred yards away and you can easily walk. *Site open daily from 8 am until 7 pm; $$$. The museum is open Monday through Saturday, 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, and Sunday, 9 am to 4 pm; $.* Just north of the ancient site is the fine **Archaeological Museum**. It has artifacts from Olympia on display and puts the whole thing into perspective. *Hours are the same as for the ancient site except that it opens at noon on Monday, $$.* Although the majority of visitors to Katákalon will probably wind up at Olympia, it is likely that your cruise ship will offer other excursions. One of the more interesting possibilities – if you've had your fill of ancient sites – is to go to **Patra**, a nearby city of historic note that has, among other things, a large fortress.

Shopping: Souvenirs and handicrafts can be found both in Katákalon and Olympia, but they're nothing special and the prices won't be low.

Sports & Recreation: Although Katákalon is on a small peninsula that juts out into the Ionian Sea, this side of the Peloponnese isn't known for its resorts and beaches. So be a good trooper and head off to the ancient site.

◆ NOTE: **Korcula**, Croatia: *See* Hvar, Croatia.

Kusadasi/Ephesus, Turkey

Kusadasi means "bird island," and it comes from the small island just offshore (see the *Sights* section for more on this). It's a relatively modern city by Turkish standards and the sights of this area are well suited to a day port call. Most cruise itineraries allow between six and nine hours here. This gives you enough time to visit the area's high-

light – the ruins at Ephesus – as well as take in some other sights either in town or elsewhere.

Arrival: Your ship will be able to dock near the center of town so long as it does not exceed 850 feet in length. Otherwise, a tender will be required to get to shore. Either way, the heart of Kusadasi is in walking distance, but this might not be of such importance since the majority of passengers will be heading out on excursions.

Tourism Information Office: Immediately outside of the Kusadasi port gate at Iskele Meydani & Atatürk Bulvari, ☎ (0256) 614 1103.

Getting Around: The relatively few sights in Kusadasi itself are in close proximity to the cruise ship dock so you can easily walk. However, Ephesus and other area sights are several miles away, sometimes farther. Therefore, you should consider joining a guided shore excursion. If you don't mind being in a true "foreign" atmosphere on your own, then forego the guided trips and hop in a taxi to get to the major sights. It will save you quite a bit of money but do negotiate prices.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Let's start with the in-town sights, which you can cover in an hour. The downtown waterfront has a pretty promenade along Atatürk Bulvari (Boulevard) and there's also the remains of an old fortress on a small park-like area called **Pigeon Island**. It is reached by a foot bridge and makes for a pleasant stroll around the fortress. It is rare to find the fortress itself open to visitors, not that there is much to see even if it were. Kusadasi also has a fairly large bazaar called the **Istikial Sok**. It's worth a brief look because it's always bustling and full of local flavor. If you walk up Barbaros Hayrettin Bulvari you will reach an ancient **arch** and pass by several mosques.

But the reason ships call on Kusadasi is not the modern city at all – it's to allow you to visit the incredible ruins of **Ephesus** (Efes). The city of Ephesus was a great port in ancient times (silting has moved it several miles inland over the years) and was founded in the 11th century BC. It flourished and grew, especially under Roman rule, which began in 189 BC. Most of the remains are from the Roman era. Excavations of the site began in 1863 and work continues to this day. Ephesus is only a 10-minute ride from the harbor. Most cruise passengers sign up on the ship for an excursion that includes transportation to and from Ephesus and a guided tour. You can save some money by taking a taxi (car rentals aren't readily available). Bargain with the driver to get a good price or you may end up paying almost as much as for the guided excursion. The driver will drop you off at the northern gate to Ephesus and will suggest meeting him at the southern gate about an hour later. If you want more time, be prepared to pay for it (you can usually wiggle some extra time out of him

for no extra charge). Ephesus can be seen thoroughly in under two hours, although ancient history/archaeology buffs could easily spend almost the entire day. This is one of the best-preserved ancient cities in the world and certainly one of the most impressive. Your exploration will follow the main road through the city, which runs from north to south, although there are a few side streets that are well worth exploring too. Among the structures that have been uncovered are several important temples (most notably the **Temple of Hadrian**), the baths, apartment houses and – the most famous building of all – the **Celsus Library**. The exquisite façade of this building is a sight you will always remember. On the way out you can see the wonderfully preserved amphitheater, which can accommodate more than 24,000 people and is still used for performances. *Open daily, 8:30 am to 7 pm; $$$.*

Most of the other worthwhile sights near Ephesus are located in the town of Selçuk.

> ◆ NOTE: Time for a brief language lesson. The use of a cedilla in Turkish turns a "c" into a "ch" sound, so Selçuk is Sel-chuk.

You can get to Selçuk either by guided tour or taxi. Among the better sights are the fine **Ephesus Museum** (*open daily, 8:30 am to noon and 1-5pm; $*) and the **Basilica of St. John** (*open daily, 8 am to 5:30 pm; $*). It is reputed that the basilica is built over the site where John is buried, but historians aren't so sure. Lots of people may want to make a pilgrimage-like 4½-mile trip from Ephesus to **Meryemana**, the modest house where the Virgin Mary is said to have lived. *Open daily, 8:30 am to noon and 1 to 5 pm, $.* Many ship itineraries don't allow long enough in port to do *both* the ruins and these other sights unless you make your visit a very cursory one and hop from one place to another via a waiting taxi. If you have to pick one, I strongly recommend the ancient site of Ephesus.

***Shopping**:* The aforementioned **Istikial Sok** has a large number of vendors selling a variety of goods. However, I suggest saving your money for the greater shopping wonders of Istanbul as most cruises that stop here also visit Istanbul. If not, and you want to experience a Turkish bazaar, then by all means – shop away!

Sports & Recreation: There are several beaches in the area. **Cape Yilanci** is about a half-mile south of the port, while **Kadinlar Denizi** is about another mile farther. These are the better beaches, but if you want to stay closer you can use the public beach on Atatürk Bulvari, just a short walk north from the cruise ship dock. There are "Turkish" baths in Kusadasi, but they have been Westernized to accommodate

all the visitors. And, because of that, they are more expensive then you will find in many other places in Turkey.

La Goulette/Tunis, Tunisia

Although the city sits near the location of the capital of ancient Carthage, there is little evidence of that. That's because during the Third Punic War the Romans made it their business to completely fulfill the popular jingoist expression of the day, "Carthage must be destroyed." Well, they really leveled it! Contemporary Tunis is a bustling and modern metropolis with almost two million citizens and plenty of resort facilities along with a host of places to see.

Arrival: The port of La Goulette can handle many ships at one time, but nothing longer than about 790 feet. A bigger limitation might be the beam, which cannot exceed 99 feet (and mega-liners do), so tenders are likely to be needed. The terminal has good facilities. La Goulette is roughly six miles from downtown Tunis, but it is walking distance from the terminal to public transportation, most notably the TMG train (see *Getting Around*).

Tourism Information Office: The tourist office is in Tunis at 1 Ave. Mohammed V, ☎ 341-077.

Getting Around: Independent travelers will find the mass transit system efficient, comfortable, safe and easy to use. The port (and Carthage) are connected to central Tunis via a suburban train called the TGM. The city of Tunis has an excellent metro system consisting of five lines, so it's entirely possible to see Tunis on your own. However, because of cultural differences you might feel more comfortable with a guided shore excursion, even if you are not venturing outside the city itself. This is strictly a personal decision based on your own comfort levels since Tunis is a reasonably safe place.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: **T**here are many possible excursions from Tunis, including trips to the attractive suburban community of Sidi Bou Said, the resorts of the Cape Bon peninsula, the old port city of Bizerte to the north of Tunis, and various ruins (especially those of **Utica** and **Thuburbo Majis**). Although it's nice to get into the countryside, you'll have just a day and the sights in and immediately surrounding Tunis are, in my view, more worthwhile. Begin with the aforementioned site of **ancient Carthage** (on the way in from La Goulette port, about six miles from downtown via the TMG train). As mentioned earlier, the Romans didn't leave much of the city when they obliterated it in 146 BC to close out the Third Punic War. Fortunately, however, there is quite a bit to see from the long era of Roman rule in the vast **Archaeological Park** where you can admire

the Roman **theater** and **baths**. The latter are among the largest Roman public baths that can still be visited in the Mediterranean region. While you're here, be sure to visit the **National Museum** that sits on the top of Byrsa Hill and has an excellent view of the entire Carthage area along with informative exhibits. *Take TGM train to the Carthage-Hannibal Station; open daily, 8 am to 7 pm; $$ combined for ruins and museum.*

For those staying in Tunis, most places of interest will be found inside the old walled city (known as the **Medina**) that dates from the eighth century. Modern Tunis is in the **Ville Novelle**, just west of the Medina. However, other than services (which you probably won't need as a cruise ship passenger), it has little to offer the visitor. Enter the Medina via the **Bab Bhar** (or Porte de France) on its eastern side, just under a mile from the TMG train station. You could spend an entire day wandering around its maze of streets and colorful markets. The best attractions are concentrated near the center of the Medina, around the rue de la Kasbah. The two most important sites are the **Zitouna Mosque** (although the Medina contains no fewer than a half-dozen other major mosques) and the **Dar Ben Abdallah Museum**. The mosque is the largest in Tunisia and dates from the eighth century. It is said to be the oldest building in Tunis still in use, and some of its columns were taken from earlier Roman structures. *Rue Jemaa Zitovna; open daily except Friday, 8 am to noon; Non-Muslims can go in only as far as the courtyard.* The museum is good for learning about local history and its costume collection is outstanding. But part of the fun of visiting it is that the museum occupies a former palace. *Impasse Ben Abdallah; open daily except Sunday, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm; $.*

The markets (known as *souqs*) aren't as famous as the bazaars of Istanbul, but they can be almost as much fun. The two biggest are the **Souq el Attarine** and the **Grand Souq des Chechias**. The former is a great place for perfume although, like all big markets, they sell a variety of goods in addition to their specialty. The Souq des Chechias is where *fezes* (traditional red hat) are made. One final attraction that you should try to find time for is the **Bardo Museum**, located two miles northwest of downtown. It can be reached by Line 4 of the metro. The museum was once a splendid palace and those surroundings will enhance your visit. The most notable items here are exquisite Roman-era mosaics that have been gathered from all over Tunisia. *Rue Mongi Slim; open daily except Monday, 9 am to 5 pm; $.*

Time permitting, there are two other interesting places to visit. The **Tourbet-el-Bey** is the elaborate tomb of the Ottoman *beys* who once ruled over what is now Tunisia. The tile-work is wonderful and so is the architecture, with its domes and other Eastern features. *Rue*

Tourbet-el-Bey, in the southern end of the Medina; open daily, 9:30 am-4:30 pm. The **Dar Lasram Palace** is a fine building that is notable for its highly colorful tiled courtyards. Besides the architecture, the palace is now home to a good exhibit about the Medina. *24 Rue de Tribunal; open daily except Sunday, 8:30 am-1 pm and 3-5:30 pm.*

***Shopping**:* Bargaining is definitely a way of life in Tunis, not only in the marketplaces, but in just about every store. The *souks* mentioned in the sightseeing tour are the best places to head for if you want authentic Tunisian items. Local craftsmen are well regarded for their skills in pottery and ceramic items, silver and leather. If you don't like to bargain then you should head for Avenue Habib Bourguiba, where you'll find the government-run handicraft center called **SOCOPA**. Prices are fixed here but are not unattractive compared to what you'll probably wind up paying in the markets (as the shopkeepers can easily pick out Americans who they assume are all wealthy and can pay top price).

Sports & Recreation: With its long coastline, Tunisia has lots of watersports. The best places are south of Tunis in the resort towns, especially around Gabes. There are some good beaches in the Tunis area and the best of the lot are about seven miles from downtown in the suburb of **Sidi Bou Said**. Besides swimming, you can go sailing or participate in any number of water-related activities, all centered around the large marina. Land-based sports include golf. The **Carthage Golf Course** is an 18-hole facility only six miles from downtown Tunis and near the port of La Goulette.

Lisbon, Portugal

The beautiful and interesting city of Lisbon lies on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and not the Mediterranean Sea. However, because of its proximity to the Mediterranean, its cultural and historic ties to the region, and the fact that many Mediterranean cruises begin or end in Lisbon, its inclusion in any book on cruising the Mediterranean is a must. Lisbon, which sits alongside the broad and picturesque Tagus River, has long been a departure point for sea travelers. Lisbon's myriad attractions can be divided into two major areas– those in the city center and those in Belém, a riverside district several miles to the west of downtown.

***Arrival**:* Lisbon's large and modern cruise ship terminal complex is part of the vast Alcantara Docks, which are situated about half-way between downtown Lisbon and Belém. Depending upon the specific terminal your ship uses, this can be as much as a couple of miles.

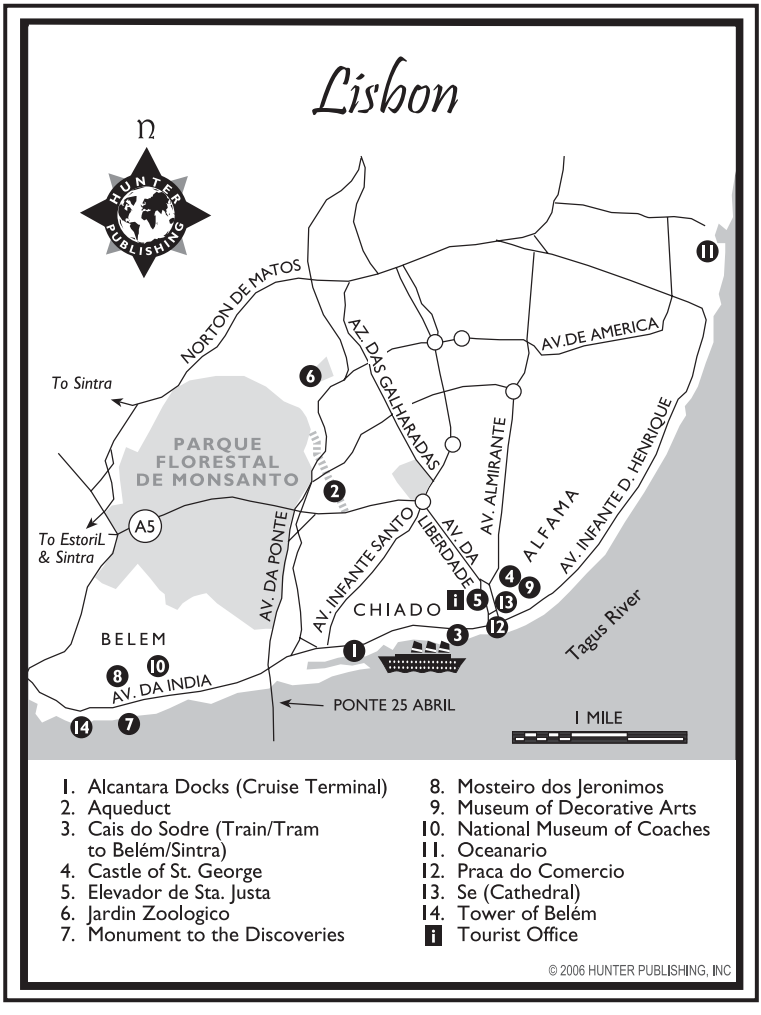
Taxis and buses are a quick means of making the journey if you're traveling on your own.

Tourism Information Office: The new "Lisboa Welcome Center" is one of Europe's best city tourist offices. Praça do Comércio, ☎ 210 312 810. There is also an official tourist information kiosk in the Belém district opposite the Jeronimos Abbey.

Getting Around: You can easily reach either downtown or the Belém area from the port by taking the #15 tram that runs along the waterfront. The tram stop is only a short walk from the cruise ship passenger terminal. Within central Lisbon (including the historic Alfama district) it is best to get around on foot, although the excellent metro, along with a network of other trams and buses, can be used to get to more distant places if you tire of walking or don't want to use expensive taxis. Belém's major sights are all in walking distance of one another. Even for a one-day visit it is a good idea to purchase the "Lisbon Card," which provides unlimited use of the public transportation system as well as admission to most of the important museums. This time- and money-saver is also available in multiple day periods for those staying in Lisbon before or after the cruise. It can be purchased from the Tourism Information Office.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: A day visit to Lisbon can introduce you to the most important sights of both the city center and Belém. The center city sights begin with the cathedral and the castle, both located in an area known as **Alfama**. This charming neighborhood (along with Bairro Alto, or Madragoa) is one of the older sections of the city, with winding streets, hills and interesting architecture. It's a great place to walk around. The cross-shaped **Se Catedral de Lisboa** (on Largo da Se) dates from the 12th century. It has three naves, along with the Treasury and the Monstrance of Dom José, which is used in the Eucharist and contains more than 4,100 precious stones. The Gothic-style chapel is considered one of the masterpieces of the interior. *Open daily except Sunday, 10 am until 5 pm. The Cloister and Sacistry are open daily except Monday. from 10am until 1pm and from 2 until 6pm.*

Nearby, towards the Tagus River, is the **Castelo de Sao Jorge** (Castle of St. George), one of Lisbon's most famous sights. Also dating from the 12th century, the fortress reflects the country's history and was rebuilt in the 1940s to its original appearance. The crenelated walls and battlements are a stirring sight – and so, too, is the view of the city and river from atop those walls. The castle contains many historical exhibits. *Open daily, 9 am-9 pm. There is no charge except for special exhibits.* Not far from the castle at the river's edge is the commercial heart of the city known as the **Praça do Comércio**. In this



area you should see the **triumphal arch** and the attractive **steps** to the river.

Other Lisbon sights (to the northwest of the Comercio) that you might consider are the **Basilica da Estrela**, on Largo da Estrela. *Open daily, 8 am-12:30 pm and 3-7:30 pm.* This 18th-century church is notable for its two bell towers. The **Aguas Livres** is an 11-mile-long aqueduct constructed in the 18th century. It is supported by 109 masonry arches in the neo-classical style. The **Elevador de Santa Justa** is a strange looking elevator that ascends one of Lisbon's many hills, from the top of which you'll have an excellent view of the

remains of the **Convento do Carmo**, a late medieval convent. The *elevador*, which operates most of the time, is located on Rua de Santa Justa. *$.* Some of the convent ruins have been restored and a portion has been converted into the **Museu Arqueológico do Carmo**. The emphasis is on tombs and funerary rites of ancient and Islamic civilizations. Not the most pleasant of topics, but still educational and interesting. *Museum open daily except Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm; $.*

Belém has a wonderful assortment of museums and historical sites, all located in close proximity to one another. Your first stop along the waterfront should be the impressive white **Monument to the Discoveries** (Padrao dos Descobrimentos), built in 1960 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the death of Henry the Navigator. Henry was the greatest driving force behind the age of the Portuguese Discoveries. The monument is shaped like the prow of a ship and is adorned with huge statues of Henry and other important discoverers. *Avenida da Brasilia. Open daily except Monday, 9 am-5 pm; $.* The **Tower of Belém** (Torre de Belém) was constructed to defend the Tagus by King Dom Manuel I at the turn of the 16th century. The beautiful structure has definite Moorish architectural influences and has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. *Avenida de Brasilia. Open daily except Monday, 10 am-6:30 pm; $.* **Jeronimos Abbey** (Mosteiro dos Jeronimos) is across the *Praça* (or square) from the Monument to the Discoveries. This vast structure (another UNESCO site) was built in 1502 – around the same time as the Tower of Belém – to commemorate the discovery of the sea route to India. The wide façade fronts a beautiful garden with a magnificent central fountain. The sculptures and other detailing on the exterior make the Abbey the foremost example of the Manueline style of architecture. The equally ornate interior houses the tombs of the explorer Vasco de Gama and other notable figures. The cloister is of special interest. *Praça do Imperior. Open daily except Monday, 10 am-5:30 pm; cloister, 10 am-2 pm; $ for cloister only.* Just east of here is the **National Coach Museum** (Museu dos Coches). This fine structure houses one of the largest and most impressive collections of royal coaches and paraphernalia. *Calçada da Ajuda at the intersection of Rue de* Belém*. Open daily except Monday, 10 am-5:30 pm; $.*

Additional Sights: There are a host of other places to visit in and around Lisbon and since many cruises embark or debark in Lisbon you might well find yourself with more time to spend in the city or you might just prefer some of these alternative options. The **Casa do Fado** is an interesting little museum that highlights the history of Portugal's haunting "Fado" music. There is also much about the famous Portuguese guitar. Largo do Chafariz de Dentro 1. *Daily except Tuesday, 10 am to 1 pm and 2 to 6 pm; $.* Another good stop

is the **Decorative Arts Museum** (Museu-Escola de Artes Decorativa), located in the former Palace of Azurara in the Alfama Quarter. It has an excellent collection of art work and household items from the 15th through 19th centuries*. Largo das Portas do Sol 2. Daily except Monday, 10 am until 5 pm; $$.* The **Zoo** (Jardim Zoologico) has been delighting visitors for more than 100 years with one of the finest animal collections in Europe. This is a great stop if you are traveling with children. Estrada de Benfica 158. *Daily, 10 am until 8 pm; $$.* As long as we're on parks, the **Jardim Botânico**, Rue de Escola Politéonica 58, is a nice place to stroll. *Open daily from 9 am (10 am on weekends) to 8 pm; $.* However, if your park interests are more in tune with just animal life then you should also consider visiting the modern Oceanarium (Oceanario), the most popular holdover attraction from the 1998 World Expo held in Lisbon. Depending upon how you measure such things, this is the second-largest aquarium in the world. It has an outstanding collection of marine species, and the building itself is a striking example of post-modern architecture*. Parque das Nacoes. Daily, 10 am until 7 pm; $$$.* Portugal's cultural history is tied up with the famous *azulejos* or blue tiles. The best place to learn more about these is at the **Museu Nacional do Azuelo**, *Rua Madre de Deus 4.* The museum documents and has samples from nearly 600 years of tile-making. It occupies a former 16th-century convent. *Open daily except Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm (2 to 6 pm on Tuesday); $.* Last, but not least for art lovers, is the **Calouste Gulbenkian museum of art**. This fine facility houses the personal collection of Sr. Gulbenkian, a noted philanthropist. The collections are divided into European and Oriental sections, with the latter into Islamic art and that of the Far East. *Avenida de Berna 45A, open daily except Monday, 10 am to 5:45 pm (from 2 to 5:45 pm on Tuesday); $.* A brief visit to Portugal's **National Pantheon**, the Panteao Nacional, will make a nice way to close out your city visit. It is housed in a gleaming white-domed church called the Igreja de Santa Engracia. Campo do Sonia Clara. *Daily except Monday, 10 am until 5 pm; $.*

Outside the City: If you have an extra day here, use it to explore a few of the splendid palaces near the suburban community of Sintra. In fact, many cruise passengers choose to bypass the city entirely in favor of the delights of the Sintra area. This isn't a strategy that I can fault because Sintra has so many wonderful places to explore. It's a tough call for day-trippers because Lisbon is equally fascinating. One thing is certain – you cannot reasonably expect to combine the city and Sintra on a one-day port call. There are varied shore excursions to the area or you can get there on your own. You can't possibly see all of the sights of Sintra in a single day, so start with the best, the outlandish and colorful **Palacio Nacional da Pena**, in the Parque da

Pena, built in medieval style. It's a fanciful masterpiece, with fairy-tale-like turrets and a sumptuous interior. The huge gardens and park are also worth exploring. *Open daily except Monday from 10 am to 6:30 pm; $$*. Separate admission if you visit the park, but you can get a combined ticket. Less amazing but still worthwhile is the **Palacio National de Sintra.** If you don't want to rent a car or take a guided shore excursion, try the train service from Lisbon's Rossio station, which runs frequently. Once in Sintra station, a moderately priced shuttle bus connects all of the major sights, including the aforementioned palaces and the Castle of the Moors (discussed below). Ask at the tourist office for schedules and other information. The Palacio Nacional de Sintra was constructed by the Moors. In addition to Moorish architecture there are elements of Gothic, Manueline and Renaissance. The highlight of this splendid treasure are the famous blue tile panels (*azulejo*). *North end of Sintra-Vila at the Praça de Republica. Open daily except Wednesday, 10 am until 5:30 pm; $.*

Not too far from Sintra is the **Palacio Nacional de Queluz,** in the town of Queluz (also reached by train from Rossio station). *South of Sintra. Open daily from 10 am until 5 pm; $.* This structure has often been compared to Versailles because of its outstanding gardens with many fountains and statues. The palace itself is not as elaborate as Versailles or even the other major palaces in and around Sintra. However, it is closer than the others and makes for a nice little trip of a few hours. *Between Lisbon and Sintra in the town of Queluz. Open daily except Tuesday, 10 am until 1 pm and 2-5 pm; $.*

Getting around Sintra can be accomplished by buses or taxis, but these aren't as convenient as renting a car. If you have any additional time to explore, there are several other sights well worth seeing. The exotic gardens of the **Parque de Monserrate** are three miles west of Sintra via Estrada de Monserrate*. Open daily, 9 am until 8 pm; $.* At Castelo dos Mouros, an eighth-century Moorish fortification, you'll see the remains of this hilltop fortress and castle. Equally rewarding is the panoramic view from atop the walls which follow the contours of the land. Some people think this is the best place to photograph the nearby Pena Palace in all its glory. *Estrada da Pena. Open daily, 9 am until 8 pm.* If driving, consider making a short detour past Sintra to stop at **Cabo da Roca**, a rugged, wild and sometimes eerie spot that overlooks the pounding surf of the Atlantic Ocean. This is the most westerly point of land in mainland Europe and – if you wish – you can purchase an inexpensive certificate attesting to the fact that you were here. However, this detour is recommended only for those who have plenty of available time. If you do go out this way, on the way back to Lisbon you might want to take a brief look at the seaside

resorts on the coast around **Estoril**, which has one of Europe's biggest casinos with Las Vegas-style entertainment nightly.

***Shopping**:* First, it is worth mentioning that if you are a big shopper it will pay to get the *Lisboa Shopping Card.* This works differently than the Lisbon Card. You purchase it (available at the tourist office and many stores) for a set amount ($$ for 24 hours; multi-day cards also for sale) and then receive a 20% discount at more than 200 participating stores. Lisbon's city center is filled with places to shop. Most visitors are interested in acquiring tiles and ceramics along with handicrafts. Portuguese wine is also in demand. The city boasts a half-dozen major shopping centers with the emphasis in most of them being on "big." These are the **Atrium Saldanha, Centro Comercial Colombo, Centro Vasco de Gama, Complexo das Amoreiras, El Corte Inglés** and the **Galeria Monumental.**

Sports & Recreation: Lisbon has a host of spectator sports. It has three soccer clubs as well as bullfighting. However, the seasons for both are generally outside of the cruise season. You might catch the beginning or end of one or both sporting seasons depending upon when your cruise is. The tourist office can provide schedules and further information.

- NOTE: You might be interested to know that Portuguese bullfighting differs from that in Spain and Mexico in that the bull is not killed in the ring in front of spectators.

As a large city, Lisbon's parks provide a variety of recreational activities, but it's unlikely that you're coming here for that.

Livorno/Pisa/Florence, Italy

The port city of Livorno certainly isn't one of the hottest draws in Italy, but it is one of the most popular of all Mediterranean ports. The reasons for that, however, lie beyond Livorno itself. Both Pisa (20 miles) and Florence (60 miles) are close enough to make excursions worthwhile. And those two locations, especially Florence, are among the biggest attractions in all of Europe. The biggest question you'll have upon selecting any cruise with Livorno as a port of call is to decide your basic strategy. Combining Pisa and Florence is totally out of the question. Livorno itself is hardly worth taking the time to see, although you could combine it with Pisa if you're fast at sightseeing. If you've already seen Pisa and Florence you can also choose to see some of the resort areas on the Ligurian coast – the Italian Riviera. Or you can combine some Riviera sights with those in Livorno. As far as

Florence is concerned, it is simply impossible to see it in one day, especially after you subtract the time it takes to get there and back from the port. There are too many great sights. Since one day can't do Florence the proper justice, does that mean you should make Pisa your number one priority? Not necessarily. It depends upon your future travel plans. If you feel that there is a good chance that you're going to get back to Italy on a land trip where you can spend at least two days in Florence, then I would choose Pisa as the best alternative. However, if you think this might well be it for you when it comes to seeing Italy, a little Florence is certainly better than none at all. So go for it!

Arrival: The port of Livorno can accommodate even the largest ships and with berths for up to six vessels simultaneously, you should always be able to walk directly onto the dock from your ship. The passenger terminal has full facilities and is just over a quarter-mile from the center of Livorno. Taxis are available and the railroad station is about two miles from the port.

Tourism Information Office: Livorno: Stiazione Maritimo, ☎ (0586) 895 320; Pisa: Piazza del Duomo, ☎ (050) 560 464; Florence: Via Cavour 1, ☎ (055) 290 832.

Getting Around: If you are going to do the unlikely and remain in Livorno, then walking is the only transportation method you'll require. For travel to Pisa, Florence or the Ligurian coast there are several possible strategies. Although you can rent a car and drive to either Pisa or Florence, a shore excursion will be less hassle. However, this is more expensive and doesn't necessarily mean you'll have more time to see the sights. The time you save by not having to get to the train station or to rent a car is mostly offset by the fact that guided excursions don't move at the same pace as most individuals. As mentioned, trains connect the three destinations and that might be a better option for those who want to sightsee independently. Trains run frequently between Livorno and both Pisa and Florence. Pisa is relatively small and the famous attractions are in close proximity to one another so, once you arrive by either train or car, it is best seen on foot. Florence is much bigger and the tourist attractions, although concentrated in a few key areas, cover a wide stretch of terrain. Yet, it is an ideal walking city as well. And walking is the only way to truly appreciate what the city has to offer. If you follow the route I suggest, the walk is manageable and you can always take a taxi back to the starting point. If you drive to Florence, get rid of the car as soon as possible in one of many private garages in the city center. The train station in Florence, the Stazione di Santa Maria Novella, is only about a 10-minute walk from the cathedral by way of the Via de'Panzani, which is near the beginning of the one-day walking tour.

Livorno will be discussed briefly for those that do intend to spend at least some time here. Then we'll move on to Pisa and Florence.

Livorno One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Livorno has about 60,000 residents and, compared to most other localities in this region, is mostly unattractive. The main part of town, located behind the port, is island-like because it is blocked from the mainland by a canal known as the **Fosso Reale**. The local tourist offices like to call it *picccola Venezia* or "little Venice," but the comparison ends with the fact that both cities have canals! The canal area is home to the **New Fortress** (Fortezza Nuova), the larger of Livorno's two fortresses. It was built by the powerful Medici family in the 16th century and much of it is in ruins, but the impressive outer walls are still largely intact The other fortress, naturally called the **Old Fortress** (Fortezza Vecchia) even though it isn't much older than the New Fortress, is on the waterfront near the port. Livorno's **cathedral** is in Piazza Grande, almost exactly in the middle of the main loop of the Fosse Reale. A final point of interest is the **Mercado Centrale** on Via Roma, notable for its attractive 19th-century surroundings.

Pisa One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Pisa has somewhat fewer people than Livorno, but it will seem far more crowded because of the huge number of visitors in its historic center. It would be a provincial backwater if not for the famous Leaning Tower. That's what people come to see. The tower (*Torre Pendente* in Italian) is, however, only one part of a magnificent complex known as the Field of Miracles (Campo dei Miracoli). This is one of Europe's most fabulous municipal squares, located just northwest of the city center and about a half-mile north of the Arno River which sweeps gracefully through Pisa. The train station is south of Piazza Vitorrio Emanuele II, about three-quarters of a mile from Campo dei Miracoli. Spread out on the beautifully manicured lawns and open spaces of the Campo are the Leaning Tower, the baptistery (*battistero*) and the cathedral (*duomo*), among numerous other structures. The Leaning Tower was intended to have been the bell tower (*campanilei*) for the cathedral and, despite having a renowned architect, started to lean during its construction. The problem is the nature of the underlying soil. The lean increased about one millimeter a year and the tower reached more than 16 feet out of perpendicular. The authorities were so concerned that the whole thing would soon topple that an extensive stabilization program was undertaken, which was completed a few years ago. The lean has, as anticipated, continued to self-correct and in 1990 it was fewer than 13 feet out of perpendicular. Experts expect it to remain this way for several hundred years. The good news is that visitors won't have their view of the tower blocked by scaffolding and you can once again climb the tower all the way to the top (a tiring but rewarding adventure of 294 steps) in small groups. Although

the tower is the principal attraction, most visitors come away from a trip to Pisa more appreciative of the other Romanesque-styled structures of the campo. The duomo was begun in 1064 and is distinguished for its exterior columned façade, the almost six dozen interior columns and its fine art collection. The baptistery is about 90 years newer than the cathedral and is of special architectural interest because it is round. Since it took so many centuries to complete, it has evidence of styles other than Romanesque. The overall appearance is nothing short of brilliant, much like the acoustics beneath the lovely dome.

The **Opera Museum** (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), only a couple of blocks from the major part of the complex, is also considered to be a part of the Campo dei Miracoli. It contains many works of art that were originally in the cathedral, baptistery and tower. Another museum in the Campo is the **Museo delle Sinope**. This is interesting for those who wish to learn more about how frescoes are created. Exhibits take you through the entire laborious process. You should complete your visit by walking through the cemetery on the north side of the duomo. Although it was badly damaged during World War II, enough of the beautiful frescoes in the cloisters survived to make a visit worthwhile. *Hours of operation are as follows: Cathedral, daily, 10 am to 7:30 pm (from 1 pm on Sunday); Leaning Tower, daily, 8 am to 8 pm; baptistry, daily, 8am to 7:30 pm; Museo dell'Opera, daily, 8 am to 7:15 pm; cemetery, daily, 8 am to 7:30 pm.* There are several ticket combinations available. $$ admits you to two sites or museums while an additional $$$ allows admission up to four. Although the savings is minimal, it is worthwhile to get the latter because it saves a lot of time waiting to buy tickets. The cathedral is an extra $ while entry to the tower is a hefty $$$$. Only a small number of visitors are allowed to climb the tower each day, so if you want to do this then it is wise to book reservations in advance on their website at *www.opapisa.it.*

Most other sights in Pisa are in the area just north of the Arno River and include the gorgeous **Piazza dei Cavalieri**, with its many fine palaces and other structures. The **Palazzo dell'Orologio**, built in 1560, is the square's finest example of that period's architecture. Several fine churches are also in the vicinity. Finally, try to find some time to visit Pisa's fascinating medieval section, centered along and around the **Borgo Stretto**, which runs north from the river.

Last, but not least, **Pisa's Museo Nazionale di San Matteo** is an excellent fine arts gallery. *Lungarno Medicei. Open daily except Monday from 8:30 am to 7:30 pm (to 1:30pm on Sunday); $$.*

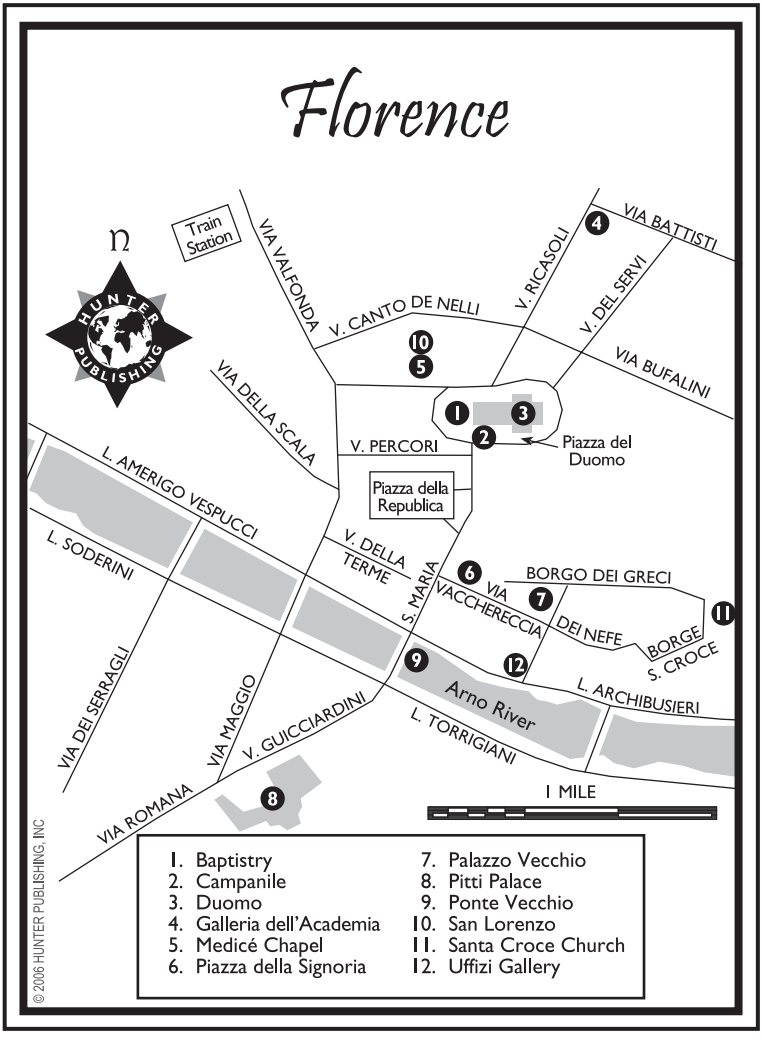
Florence One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Because of the historical, cultural and artistic importance of Florence, it is always listed in the

cruise brochures with Livorno. As previously mentioned, one day isn't nearly enough to visit Florence. This is especially true if you are the type of person who really appreciates fine art and architecture. Many people could easily spend a week here and still not have seen everything of consequence. Allowing for travel time to and from Livorno, you can probably count on a maximum of nine hours in Florence (most Livorno port calls are deliberately lengthy to allow for this). The fact that you can't see *everything* shouldn't discourage you – a full day in Florence is one that you will not soon forget! What makes Florence so special? Central Florence (*Firenze* in Italian) has the atmosphere of a time gone by, and despite the fact that this is a city of almost half a million people, it has a modern side. It was the home and workshop of such luminaries as Michelangelo and is, in many ways, the epitome of the Renaissance and all it stood for. Every street and every alley is filled with something of artistic or historic merit. To say that Florence is a veritable living museum is to put it mildly. In some ways, even Rome cannot compete with what Florence has to offer. The suggested itinerary cannot be all inclusive, but is, in my judgment, what is most important. You probably won't have time to see all the things I've suggested, so you might want to pick out those that are of most interest to you and do them first. If you still have time after that, add more as time permits. Everything is close enough so that you won't waste time running back and forth. In fact, you'll have to work your way back to the starting point, be it the train station or where you parked your rental car, so you can always see more on the way out, and some on the way back.

The **plaza** where the cathedral is situated is a good place to begin, because it is easily reached on foot from the train station and there are many car parks in the area. Begin by walking north a short distance along Via Ricasoli until you reach **Galleria dell'Academia**, a large art museum with many notable works. The original of Michelangelo's *David* is here, one of the most famous, most recognizable and copied statues in the history of art. *Via Ricasoli 60; open daily except Monday, 8:15 am to 6:30 pm; $$.* Move on to the nearby **Basilica di San Lorenzo**, a stunning 15th-century church built for the Medicis. The most interesting part of the basilica is the **Laurenziana Library** (Biblioteca Laurenziana), which houses more than 10,000 manuscripts. It is reached by a Michelangelo-designed stairway. *Piazza San Lorenzo; open daily, 7 am to noon and 3:30-6:30 pm; $.* Adjacent to the basilica is the **Medici Chapel** (Capelle Medicee), one of the most ornately decorated tombs you'll ever see. There are many wonderful works of art throughout. *Piazza di Madonna degli Aldobrandiar; open daily except Sunday from 8:30am to 5 pm; $.*

Next stop is the fabulous **cathedral** (duomo) and its equally wonderful **baptistery** and **campanile** (bell tower). This is the fourth-largest cathedral in the world and its huge dome dominates Florence's skyline. The ambitious can climb a stairway that leads to the dome for a great view. Inside the crypt are the tomb of the architect and excavations of a previous church that stood on this site. The colorful exterior is also a sight to behold. The other buildings in the complex were completed at different times, but the overall design is harmonious. Be sure to see the gilded bronze doors of the baptistery with their famous decoration. *Cathedral open daily, 10 am to 5 pm (from 1:30 pm to 4:45 pm on Sunday); $ for crypt and $$ for access to the dome. The Baptistery is open Monday through Saturday, noon to 6:30 pm, and Sunday, 8:30 am to 1:30 pm; $. Campanile open daily, 8:30 am to 7:30 pm; $$.* A few blocks to the south is the fabulously ornate **Piazza della Signori**. This beautiful 13th-century plaza was the heart of Renaissance Florence. In a corner of the plaza is the **Loggia della Signoria,** with its fine covered outdoor display of monumental sculptures. The plaza is dominated by the **Palazzo Vecchio**, which served as the palace of the Medici for a time during the 16th century. Self-guiding tours of the palace include the courtyard and state apartments. *Open daily, 9 am to 7 pm (Thursday until 2 pm); $$.* To the immediate south of the piazza is the renowned **Uffizi Gallery.** This was once another palace and it retains a thoroughly regal aura despite the fact that it is now an art museum. And what a museum it is! It houses one of the world's foremost collections of Renaissance works with all the best Renaissance artists represented. You could spend a full day or more at the Uffizi alone, but time constraints will force you to move on. (I might add that even people who don't normally appreciate art museums are almost sure to enjoy this one.) *Piazza degli Uffizi 6; open daily except Monday, 8:15 am to 6:30 pm; $$.*

Head along the river from the south end of the Uffizi to **Ponte Vecchio**, a 14th-century bridge that may well be Florence's most famous single sight. Since it was built, this unusual bridge has been the home of a number of shops and it is always crowded with tourists browsing and buying. A small opening on the bridge's west facing side offers your only view down onto the river. A little bit south of the bridge is another Medici palace, **Palazzo Pitti**. This is the largest of all Florentine palaces. Its artworks are contained in one of three separate museums – **Galleria Patina,** the **Silver Museum** and the **Gallery of Modern Art**. The royal apartments in Pitti should not be missed. *Open daily except Monday, 8:15 am to 6:30 (the gallery closes at 2 pm); $$$ combined admission.* Behind the Pitti Palace are the lovely **Boboli Gardens**. You will probably have time to make only a cursory visit here, but do try to see the Venus grotto. If you aren't an



art lover then it might pay to spend more time in the gardens and less in the museums (other than the royal apartments). *Open daily from 8:15 am until 7:30 pm; $.*

It's already doubtful you'll have time remaining at this point, but if you're a super-fast tourist you might be able to visit the **Church of Santa Croce**. This 14th-century masterpiece is a great example of Florentine Gothic style and many of Italy's former kings are buried here. *Piazza Santa Croce 16. Open daily from 9:30 am to 5 pm (from 1 pm on Sunday); $.* Alternately, you can head up to **Piazzale**

Michelangelo (bus #13, if you don't have your own wheels) on the south bank of the Arno, not that far from the Palazzo Pitti. From this point there's an absolutely marvelous view of all of Florence and its famous red roof-tops. It's also worth considering a quick visit to **Fort Belvedere** (Forte di Belvedere), located to the immediate south of the Boboli Gardens. Today it is mainly an exhibition center. *Porta San Giorgio. Open daily from 10 am to sunset; $$$.* There are many other attractions, an endless number of churches and specialty museums. Wherever you turn you are going to bump into something that will be crowded. There is something to be said for ad-hoc exploration of Florence where you just encounter something that interests you, and so you do it.

All guided excursions to Florence pass through the beautiful Tuscan countryside and one of Italy's major wine-producing areas. If this interests you, be sure your excursion includes a winery stop but be aware that it will cut into your sightseeing time in Florence.

Shopping: Forget about Livorno and Pisa when it comes to shopping (although there is no doubt you'll find plenty of places selling cheap souvenirs in Pisa). Florence is the place to shop. Some of the biggest names in fashion originated here. Ever hear of Gucci? Shopping is conveniently located in the same area as most of the city's historic sights. It is concentrated along three streets that run perpendicular to the Arno River – **Via dei Calzaivoli**, **Via Por Santa Maria**, and **Via Roma**. The cathedral is, for practical purposes, the northern border of the shopping zone for visitors. High fashion is best sought out on Via della Vigna Nuova or Via del Tornabuone. Besides clothing, Florence is known for leather and jewelry. If the latter is your interest, then Ponte Vecchio is a good place to shop. Less pricey than the stores, which tend mostly toward the upscale side, are some of the **markets**. There is a good one in **Piazza de San Lorenzo**; open daily except Monday. There's only one problem with shopping in Florence (other than, perhaps, the price). And that is, it will cut into your sightseeing time. But, different strokes for different folks!

Sports & Recreation: None of the trio of cities is the place to go for recreational pursuits. If the beach and watersports are your most important objective, then you'll be better off spending the day on any of the nearby Ligurian resort towns both north and south of Livorno.

Malaga, Spain

Malaga, home to over a half-million people, is part of Spain's Costa del Sol resort region. Unless you want to spend your time in the sun and sand, excursions out of the town itself are the most interesting things to do during your port time. Look into the availability of guided day trips to fascinating **Ronda** (70 miles), with its beautiful gorge, or to **Antequera** (40 miles), which has a nearby national park and bird refuge. A little farther (and even more rewarding) would be a trip to Granada (80 miles) to see the incomparable **Alhambra**. You can rent a car to reach these places, although it is difficult to get into the Alhambra without advance reservations so a guided shore excursion might be the best choice.

Tourism Information Office: Pasaje de Chinitas 4; ☎ 952 213 445, and also at the Avendida Cervantes 1.

Arrival: In the past some large ships had to anchor and use tenders. This all changed in 2006 when the completion of new facilities made it possible to handle the biggest ships. From the port, Malaga itself is only a five-minute ride to the city center via taxi or shuttle service. You could even walk it.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: While many visitors will want to immediately head out of town to one of the aforementioned sites, there is enough in this port city itself to fill a few interesting hours, and everything is close to the dock. **Plaza de la Marina**, near the port, contains a lovely fountain. **Paseo de España** and **Paseo del Parque** run parallel to the port and are separated by a broad park-like mall. Just north of the Paseo del Parque are the 16th-century **cathedral** *(Calle de Molina Larias; open daily except Sunday, 10 am to 6:45 pm; $)* and the **Alcazaba**, the impressive palace and fortress of the Moors *(off Calle Alcazabilla; open daily except Monday, 9:30 am until 7 pm; $).* A series of walls connects the Alcazaba with the **Gibralfaro**, a hilltop castle that now serves as a historical museum and also offers a beautiful vista of Malaga and the Mediterranean Sea. *Same hours and admission price as the Alcazaba.* Make your final stop in Malaga the **Picasso Museum**, a new facility designed to honor the famous artist who was born in this city. In addition to having some of his better known works, the museum contains his "personal" art – that is, favorites that he kept for himself or his family. The museum occupies a former palace and there are also some artifacts dating from both Roman and Moorish times. Calle San Augustín. Open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm and on Friday and Saturday from noon to 9 pm; *$$$.*

Time permitting there are a couple of other places worth visiting. The first is the Palacio Episcopa, opposite the cathedral. It has a wonderful façade. The building is now used to host art exhibits. Plaza Obispo 6, open daily except Monday from 10 am to 2 pm *and from 6pm to 9pm.*

Finally, the **Mercado de Atarazanas**, reached through the 14th-century Moorish gate of Puerta de Atarazanas, is a bustling and colorful place, very typical of European food markets and among Spain's best.

Shopping: There are many souvenir and other shops in the heart of the city, especially surrounding the cathedral, but I suggest that you save your souvenir dollars for another port.

Sports & Recreation: There are numerous beaches and resorts in both directions from Malaga. As a rule, the farther you get from the city, the better they are. **El Palo** and **Pedregalejo** are two nice beaches in close-by suburbs. One of the nicest beaches is about seven miles away in the town of **Torremolinos**.

THE COSTA DEL SOL

The *Costa del Sol* (Sun Coast) is Spain's answer to the French Riviera, Although it may not have the same romantic connotation to many Americans as the Riviera does, it is just as popular with Europeans, perhaps even more so because it isn't quite as expensive. It extends roughly from Algeciras (near Gibraltar) in a northeasterly direction to just beyond Malaga. The main Spanish ports of call in this area are those two cities. While they have beaches, there's little doubt that the best resorts for sun and surf are the smaller towns between them. The beach doesn't end where the Costa del Sol does – other "coasts" beyond Malaga have almost equally inviting places to worship Sol. These include The Costa Tropical (Motril is the best resort town here) and the Costa de Almería (port in the city of the same name).

Marseille, France

Founded by the ancient Phoenicians, Marseille (also spelled Marseilles) is a multi-ethnic port city. As the largest city on France's Mediterranean coast, it lacks the romanticism and charm of its smaller resort neighbors. This is a heavily industrialized and mostly unattractive city with over 1.25 million residents. Although many cruise ship passengers will immediately head out of town on a shore excursion

or on their own to one of the many fabulous day-trip possibilities that the Provence region offers, you shouldn't dismiss Marseille out of hand. As a large and cosmopolitan city, it has a wealth of interesting places to visit and filling up an entire day with sightseeing is not a problem at all.

Arrival: The port of Marseille, known as the Porte Joliette, is large enough that you'll never have to tender ashore. It isn't very far from the city center either, and the easiest way to get there is by metro. There's a station right at the port on Line 2, which is only two stops from the heart of the city.

Tourism Information Office: 4 La Canebière, ☎ (04) 9113 8900.

Getting Around: For visitors, Marseille can be divided into two sections – the Vieux Port and adjacent Le Ponier on the one hand, and the rest of the city on the other. The city center is in the former, as are most of Marseille's attractions. As such, the majority of your time will be spent in the city center where everything is within a reasonable walking distance. For places that are farther away, or for getting to and from the port, the fast and efficient metro is the best way to get around. With only two lines, the system doesn't cover the entire city, but it does make negotiating it rather simple. Taxis are a good supplemental means of getting around. Avoid walking in area away from the city center as some neighborhoods in Marseille are not the safest places. For the many attractions outside of Marseille a rental car provides the greatest degree of flexibility. For those who prefer not to drive, there will always be a variety of excellent shore excursions on offer.

***The One-Day Sightseeing Tour*:** If you are going to be spending all or most of the day in Marseille and will be visiting several museums, it is a good idea to purchase a **museum passport**, which for one price ($$$) will admit you to all of the city's museums. It is available at the tourist office. The **Vieux Port** (or Old Port) is a small rectangular-shaped body of water that indents the old part of the city. To the immediate north of the Vieux Port above the Quai du Port is the neighborhood of **Le Ponier**, featuring narrow cobble-stoned streets with old houses. This much-restored area is the essence of old Marseille and is the one part of the city that has real charm. These two areas are the logical place to begin your city tour. Just a few blocks southeast from the port via rue de l'Evêche is the **Old Charity Center** (Centre de la Vieille Charité), which contains two excellent museums, one featuring Mediterranean archaeology and the other the art of Africa, Oceana, and the Americas. *2 rue de la Charité; open daily except Monday, 11 am until 6 pm; $ for each museum*. A couple of blocks east in the Centre Bourse shopping complex is the **Marseille Historical Museum** (Museé d'Histoire de Marseille). It covers the

entire gamut of local history, but the exhibits on the Roman era (including a second-century AD merchant ship) are the best part of this excellent facility. *Enter on rue de Bir-Hakeim. Open daily except Sunday, noon until 7 pm; $.* On the south side of the Historical Museum you'll find the **Musée de la Marine et de l'Economie**, in the Palais de la Bourse, which nicely ties together the effects the maritime economy has had on Marseille over the centuries. *7 La Canebière, open daily, 10 am to 6 pm; $.* A few blocks south of Place du Général de Gaulle (on the east edge of the Vieux Port) is the **Cantini Museum** (Musée Cantini), which features both modern and contemporary works of art. *19 rue Grignan; Monday to Friday, 10 am to noon and 2-6 pm; $.*

Work your way along the southern edge of the Vieux Port via the Quai de Rive Neuve. The first major attraction you'll reach is the **Abbaye-St. Victor**, originally built in the fourth century and subsequently destroyed. The current structures date from the 11th century. It is a massive place that looks something like a fortress and something like a church. Yet, at the same time, it has many Middle Eastern elements. The effect is quite stunning, but the most interesting part of a visit to the abbey is the crypt, where many church notables are buried, including the founder of the abbey. *Open daily, 8:30 am to 6:30 pm, $ for crypt only.* Just beyond the abbey is **Fort St. Nicolas**. You'll also see, on the other side of the Vieux Port, **Fort St. Jean**. These two facilities provided protection for Marseille in the old days. The forts aren't open to the public, but the best way to see their interesting exterior profiles is to go just beyond Fort St. Nicolas into the attractive **Pharaoh Gardens** (Jardin du Pharo). This entire tour gives you an excellent perspective of Marseille in centuries gone by.

Before returning from this part of the city you might consider a short side-trip to the **Church of Our Guardian Lady** (Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde), located on top of a hill about a half-mile south of the Vieux Port. Take a bus or taxi if you don't want to walk it. The impressive structure dates from the 19th century and offers an excellent panorama of Marseille and its harbor. The hill is the highest point in the city. *Open daily, 7 am until 8 pm*. To get back to your starting point you can simply reverse your walking route around the Vieux Port. But, you can save some walking and have more fun by hopping the quaint little ferry that crosses the Vieux Port. Depending upon how late your ship is staying in Marseille, you may want to consider returning to Vieux Port (which shouldn't to be confused with Port Joliette) during the evening, when it's a lively place. The activity is centered around the pedestrian-only **Place Thiers**.

On your way back to (or from) your ship, take a short boat ride. Along the Quai des Belges (near the Vieux Port/Hotel de Ville metro station) you can board one of the frequently departing boats that make the 20-minute ride to **Château d'If**. This splendid 16th-century fortress became a prison and was forever etched into history by the Alexander Dumas novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo*. *Open daily, 9 am until 7 pm; $$ for the château and $$$ for the round-trip boat fare.*

A bit northeast of the city center (best reached by the metro to the Longchamp-Cinq station) is the splendid **Palais de Longchamp**, which was built in the middle of the 19th century. Two graceful colonnaded wings of the "palace" house a museum of art and a natural history museum. *Blvd. Longchamp & Blvd. Philippon. Open daily except Monday, 10 am to 5 pm; $.*

Outside the city: There are so many possible trips around Marseille that your biggest problem will be choosing only one! The lovely surrounding region of **Provence** includes the elaborate 14th-century papal home of **Avignon** (65 miles); the celebrated Roman ruins at **Nimes** (75 miles), including the fabulous **Maison Carrée**, a marvelously preserved temple from the first century AD and the nearby **Pont du Gard** aqueduct that is almost 900 feet long and more than 150 feet high; and quaint **Aix-en-Provence** (25 miles), a lovely city that is the heart of Provence and is noted for its many fine museums and outstanding religious edifices. Avignon and the attractions at Nimes are in the same direction and you can see all of it if you're on your own. A single shore excursion that does both is harder to find. Aix-en-Provence is in a different direction so it isn't possible to add that in on a day-trip.

Shopping: As a big city, Marseille has plenty of shopping of all kinds, especially department stores. There isn't much that is unusual, however, and I would suggest saving your shopping money for another port.

Sports & Recreation: Although it is on the Mediterranean, Marseille isn't considered a resort area. But if you must seek out the sun while you're here, then head for the **Parc Balnéaire du Prado**, where you will find the best of the area's public beaches. Diving is a popular diversion and either the tourist office or your ship's shore excursion office can hook you up with an operator.

THE FRENCH RIVIERA

The French Riviera (known as the *Côte d'Azur* or Blue Coast in French) comprises a lengthy list of ports. To some, the Riviera begins at Port Vendres near the Spanish border, while Sète is about a hundred miles up the coast. But these two ports are quite distant from the other ports that most travel experts (including this author) consider part of the Côte d'Azur. Thus, for our purposes the French Riviera begins east of Marseille and ends at Monte Carlo, very close to the Italian border and the beginning of the Italian Riviera. Most cruise ships will stop only at one or two ports, although some luxury yacht cruises concentrate on this portion of the Mediterranean. The majority of these ports can be fully explored in less than a day and, because of the proximity of most of them, you might even be able to hit two in one port call. If you prefer to spend your time in one particular port, it doesn't necessarily have to be on your itinerary. For example, your ship might call on Cannes, but you can spend the day in nearby Nice or Monte Carlo. Although there is public transportation in the form of buses and trains connecting most locations, schedules aren't always convenient. If you rent a car you can easily connect the dots via the fast A-8 highway and its expensive tolls. The more scenic "Corniche" roads that hug the coastal cliffs are much slower because of their winding routes and often heavy traffic. Therefore, a shore excursion to a different port is a good way to go. For those of you who are considering driving, here's a look at distances between the Riviera ports. Toulon and Monte Carlo are almost exactly one hundred miles from one another, so any other combination of Riviera ports would be less than 200 miles round-trip, something that's quite manageable in a day-trip by car. Even better, several ports (specifically, Nice, Cannes, Monte Carlo and Villefranche) are literally just minutes apart. See map on page 163.

Messina/Taormina (Sicily), Italy

Because Messina is the port in Sicily most called on by cruise ships, this is a good time for some background on the island. Fascinating Sicily covers an area of almost 10,000 square miles. It is one of the most beautiful of Mediterranean islands, as well as being the largest. The history of this Italian island goes far back – among the earliest

settlers were the ancient Greeks, who established a colony at what is now Syracuse. For a time, Syracuse rivaled Athens in importance until it was finally defeated. Almost all Mediterranean cruises calling on Sicily stop at only one of the five most important ports besides Messina and Taormina. The others are Catania, Palermo and Syracuse. You might find some cruises from European lines or the more luxurious small ship lines that make more than one port call. All of the cities except Palermo are located along Sicily's eastern coast (the side closest to the Italian mainland), which enables you to see two or even three localities on a full-day port call either via excursion or on your own. It is only 95 miles from Messina in the northeast corner to Syracuse in the southeast. Messina and Taormina are separated by only 26 miles and from there on to Catania it is another 28 miles. Syracuse and Catania are separated by a distance of some 40 miles. On the other hand, Palermo, on the north coast, is 140 miles from Messina via the north coast road and 129 miles from Catania via the inland route. Although an excellent highway connects Palermo to either of those destinations, the round-trip distance simply makes it too far for a one-day excursion. Therefore, unless something in Palermo really catches your fancy (Palermo will be described later), choose a cruise that stops at one of the other four ports in order to give yourself the biggest variety of touring options.

Arrival: The docks in Messina can handle ships of up to 700 feet, meaning that all of the mega-liners will have to anchor in the harbor and tender passengers to shore. Only small ships can tie up at Taormina. Facilities are very limited in both ports. The good news is that the city or town center is close at hand in both cases.

Tourism Information Offices: Messina: Via Calabria 301, ☎ (090) 674 236; Taormina: Palazzo Corvaja, ☎ (0942) 23243.

Getting Around: Sightseeing in each of these locations can be mostly accomplished on foot. In Messina, a free tram operates along the waterfront from the Piazza Cairoli to the Regional Archaeological Museum. This will take care of getting you to all of the sights that aren't in the more walking-friendly old town area. Taormina's sights are generally close together, although you might want to use a taxi to the more distant places. If your itinerary calls for splitting the day between Messina and Taormina, you can get between the two places by train or bus. If you're not taking an organized shore excursion, then the best choice is to rent a car. Roads are good in this area (a controlled access highway runs along the coast) so you don't have that to worry about. The only problem you might encounter is getting a car with automatic transmission. Although Messina is the larger of the two cities, Taormina is more of a tourist town and some of the international car rental agencies might be able to provide an automatic.

The One Day-Sightseeing Tour: The options will be broken down into three categories – one for each city and one for interior excursions. While you could easily spend an entire day in smaller Taormina, Messina probably wouldn't take most visitors long to explore. The city tour for Taormina assumes that you'll be spending a full day there. For Messina, it allows enough time to hit some of the highlights in Taormina.

Messina One-Day Sightseeing Tour: This city of around 275,000 people is not exactly the most beautiful place in Sicily. In fact, as cities go, it is quite drab. On a more positive note, however, it has a beautiful setting as the shore gracefully curves along the strait that separates Sicily from the Italian mainland, which you can see across the strait. More ships dock here than in Taormina because the port is better able to accommodate them. Messina serves more as a gateway to other locations. However, its port area is close to the city center and there quite a few places that are worth seeing. The most interesting part of Messina is centered around the **Piazza del Duomo**, which has a lovely fountain and many interesting statues. It is the site of the Norman-style cathedral, sometimes called the **Norman Cathedral**, originally constructed between the 12th and 15th centuries and largely rebuilt after World War II when it was almost completely destroyed. The Treasury contains many priceless artifacts*. Open daily, 8 am to 6 pm; treasury daily except Sunday, 9 am to 1 pm; $ for treasury only.* Adjacent to the cathedral is the **clock tower**. The tower is 300 feet high and has one of Europe's largest astronomical clocks. In front of the tower is the **Fontana di Orione**; Orion was the mythical founder of Messina. As you wander around town you'll also see several small but pretty churches. Along the waterfront – which is great for strolling, but remember the tram if you tire – is the fabulous **Fontana del Neptuno** and a golden statue called the ***Madonnino del Porto***. At the far end of the waterfront thoroughfare is the **Regional Museum** (Museo Regionale), a fairly good archaeological museum. *Viale della Libertà; open daily, 9:30 am to 1:30 pm and 3 to 5:30 pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday; $$.*

Taormina One-Day Sightseeing Tour: This small town of about 10,000 people is best known for its breathtaking high perch on **Monte Tauro** that affords great views of the sea and nearby Mt. Etna. Taormina is a favorite destination because of this setting and some of its city sights. It is, in essence, a well-preserved medieval town. The main square, the **Piazza IX Aprile**, is quite attractive but the views from it are even more fetching. Foremost among the historic structures is the well-preserved third-century BC **Greek Theater**. Sitting high above the sea, it is one of the most splendid ancient theater sites in all of Europe. The Romans rebuilt it in ever grander

proportions and it is still used for productions. The acoustics are wonderful and the views are nothing short of spectacular. *Via Teatro Greco; open daily, 9 am until 7pm (until 1pm on Sunday); $$.* The **Parco Duchi di Cesarò** (also known locally as the Villa Communale but sometimes referred to in English publications as the Trevelyan Gardens after their English founder) is in another glorious setting overlooking the sea. The hanging gardens are themselves a spectacular sight. *Open daily, 9 am to 7pm.* Also of interest in Taormina is the **Piazza del Duomo**, with its grandiose baroque fountain and the 13th-century cathedral. *Cathedral open daily, 8 am to noon and 4-7 pm.* The 15th-century **Palazzo Corvaia** is also in the plaza. One place that you should attempt to visit (although it is now a hotel and sometimes non-guests find it difficult to get in) is **San Domenico Palace**. This former monastery offers some of the best views in Taormina,as well as luxurious surroundings and beautiful grounds. It is one of the finest hotels in Sicily. Finally, about three miles from the town center by way of Via Leonardo da Vinci is the **Castelmola**, the highest point in Taormina. There are ruins of a large castle that are interesting to explore, but most people come here for the overwhelming views. The route to Castelmola is uphill so don't plan on walking even if you like long strolls. Take a taxi or a local bus.

Excursions: For many visitors to Sicily, especially those with only a day off the ship, the highlight of any port along the eastern coast is the chance to take a trip to volcanic **Mt. Etna**. A visit to the top of the roughly 11,000-foot mountain and its four craters has almost always been considered a "must-see" for those coming to Sicily. The easiest access is from Taormina. Depending upon conditions, you may not be able to get very far in your explorations. Be aware that this is one of the most active volcanos in the world. As such, facilities on the mountain and various transportation methods to reach it are subject to frequent closures. Among the ways to reach it are by rental car, 4WD guided tours, and an exciting **cable car**. Always check out the current status of operations before you embark on an independent tour. If you are going the shore excursion route, the office on your ship will have up-to-date status. Even on Etna's quietest days, however, this is a sight that will not be quickly forgotten.

Shopping: Ceramics, jewelry, and embroidered lace items are popular purchases throughout Sicily. The same can be said for locally produced wines. Messina, as the bigger city, has more places to shop than Taormina and the prices will generally be lower. Taormina, which is geared towards the visitor, is also more expensive because compared to southern Italy (and especially the rest of Sicily), this is a wealthy community. Most of the shops in Taormina are upscale.

Sports & Recreation: Messina is not known as a recreational haven, but you can find some nice beaches on Sicily's north shore just past Capo Polero. Taormina is a much better choice. The most convenient beach is **Lido Mazzaró**, which sits beneath the mountainside that Taormina calls home. You get to the beach by cable car ($). The ride is quite a thrill – even if you don't want to spend time on the beach, you might consider the cable car as an attraction. In this case, getting there *is* half the fun. Near the Lido is **Isola Bella** (it means beautiful island). This is a smaller but even more beautiful beach. It is walking distance from Lido Mazzaró or you can also get there by boat.

Monte Carlo, Monaco

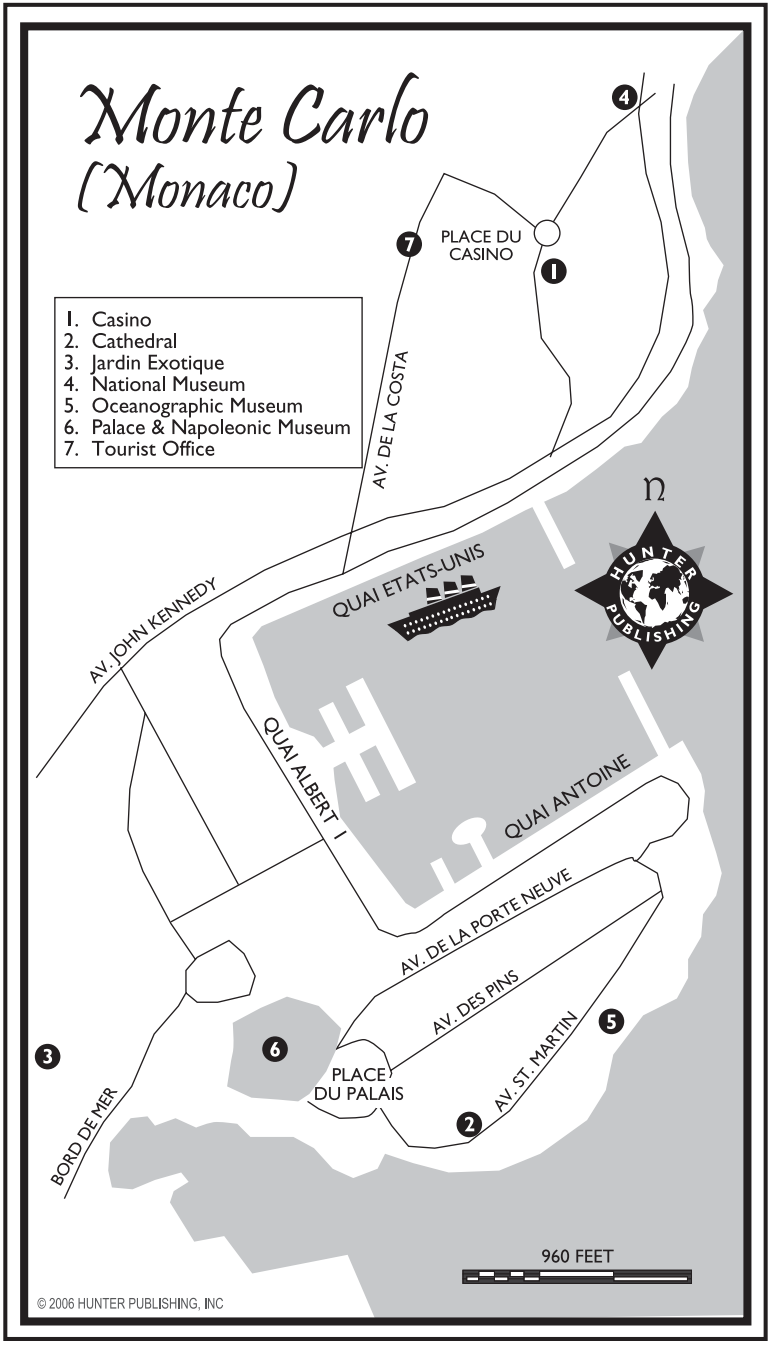
Marseille may not have been romantic, but Monte Carlo is the epitome of the romantic French Riviera! In fact, it is the one place that immediately comes to mind when you hear the words French Riviera. Monte Carlo is the capital of Monaco, a tiny principality of barely more than 30,000 people that is independent of France even though it is thoroughly French in just about every way. Romantic couples will find this luxury enclave of exquisite shopping, casinos and exciting events to be heaven, and travelers who appreciate fine scenery and interesting sights will get equal pleasure from a stop at this fascinating little port.

Arrival: The passenger ship terminal is better than you'll find in many ports of call but, unfortunately, it isn't long enough to accommodate today's larger ships. Therefore, expect to tender ashore unless you're on a ship that's under 430 feet long (unlikely) with a draft of less than 23 feet (also unlikely). As in most small port cities, the heart of the city and almost all of the sights are relatively close by. In this case, they're only a quarter of a mile away from your landing point. Taxis are available and sometimes shuttle service is offered.

Tourism Information Office: 2a Blvd. des Moulins, ☎ (377) 9216 6166.

Getting Around: If you decide to stay in Monte Carlo, there is no need for a guided tour and you can even do without the services of the local taxi drivers who'll congregate at the dock. On the other hand, they can be useful for some of the hillier portions of the city or if you tire of walking. Renting a car can be a difficult and expensive proposition. If you plan to head out of town to some of the nearby Riviera ports, a shore excursion is probably the most logical way to proceed.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Although Monte Carlo covers less than two square miles, it has enough sights that you can easily fill up


Monte Carlo
(Monaco)
1. Casino
2. Cathedral
3. Jardin Exotique
4. National Museum
5. Oceanographic Museum
6. Palace & Napoleonic Museum
7. Tourist Office
PLACE DU CASINO
AV. DE LA COSTA
AV. JOHN KENNEDY
QUAI ETATS-UNIS
QUAI ALBERT 1
QUAI ANTOINE
AV. DE LA PORTE NEUVE
AV. DES PINS
AV. ST. MARTIN
PLACE DU PALAIS
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an entire day. In fact, the size and number of sights are ideally suited to a full day in port. The old city, called **Rocher de Monaco**, sits on top of a nearly 200-foot-high hill and has fine views of Port de Monaco, the area where most of the action takes place. You can avoid climbing the steep hill by taking the incline railway that begins at Place Saint Devote, off the northwest corner of the port area. Another way to get to the top is to take the Number 2 bus from the tourist office (near the casino) to the end of the line. Atop the hill you can also visit the fabulous **Exotic Gardens** (Jardin Exotique), which boasts more than 7,000 species of flora from all over the world in addition to its fine views. From the gardens, you can access the **Observatory Caves** (Grottes de l'Observatiure), a small system of lovely caves. Be advised, however, that the caves are reached by a series of almost 300 steps, so those with difficulty walking should skip this part. Evidence has been found that pre-historic Cro-Magnon man lived in these caves. So, recently, a small archeological museum has been added. The gardens and caves are inter-connected and have a combined admission. *62 Blvd. de Jardin Exotique; open daily, 9 am to 7 pm*; *$$.*

Back down in the lower town be sure to visit Monte Carlo's beautiful and famous **Casino de Monte Carlo** (proper dress required – this isn't casual Las Vegas!), adjoining the impressive Place du Casino. *Casino open noon through 4 am; $ for entering some of the private salons.* Less known to American visitors is the **Sun Casino**, set in the Monte Carlo Grand Hotel. Also part of the main casino complex is the beautiful **Opera House**, with its magnificent chandelier and elaborate interiors. However, unless you are attending an evening performance of the opera, it isn't likely you'll be able to get inside. A bit north of the casino is the **National Museum** (Musée National), housed in a former villa surrounded by a lovely rose garden. The collection is devoted mainly to antique dolls*. 17 Avenue Princesse Grace, open daily, 10 am to 6:30 pm; $$.*

You should concentrate the rest of your shore visit in the area called **Monaco Ville**, on the southeast side of the harbor. Here are the **Palais due Prince**, the **Monaco Cathedral** and the **Oceanographic Museum** (Musée Océanographique), all within a quarter-mile of each other. The Palais du Prince's beautiful state apartments offer half-hour tours in English given at frequent intervals. *Daily, 9:30 am to 5 pm; $$.* The Napoléan Museum (Musée des Souvenirs Napoléoniens), in one of the palace wings, is an interesting museum that houses a display of items that once belonged to Napoleon. *Daily, 9:30 am to 6:30 pm; $$.* There is a combined ticket available that will save some money over separate admission fees. If you're outside the palace just before noon you'll be able to witness the colorful changing of the guard ceremony, which begins five minutes

before the hour. Monaco Cathedral is not particularly impressive by European standards, but is heavily visited because it contains the grave of beloved Princess Grace, better known to Americans as **Grace Kelly**. The crypt also contains other members of Monaco's royal family, including Prince Ranier who passed away in 2005. *Avenue St. Martin.* The Oceanographic Museum is a world-class facility with a wonderful collection of marine species in almost 100 different sea-water tanks of varying sizes. *Ave. St. Martin; open daily, 9 am to 7 pm; $$$.* End your visit with a walk along the waterfront streets surrounding Monaco Ville. A lovely park at the tip features **Fort Antoine** at the end of the small peninsula that juts out into the Mediterranean.

If you're in Monte Carlo during the latter part of May you may get caught up with the crowds and excitement of the famous **Grand Prix** auto race. While this could be a thrill for some, it might be an interference for others. Check out the exact dates at Monaco's tourism website if your cruise to Monte Carlo is around this time. Your walks through town will almost certainly take you along the route of the race.

Shopping: There are, of course, countless boutiques and other fine shops throughout Monte Carlo, both in the hotels and along the main commercial streets. You'll find quality goods of all types but these are essentially the same things that you can buy anywhere. And the prices in Monte Carlo could not be termed as being reasonable.

Sports & Recreation: Just about every participant sport is represented here (especially golf and tennis), but the facilities are mostly connected with hotels and they usually don't accommodate nonguests. However, check with your shore excursion office as the cruise lines often make arrangements in advance. Surprisingly, the beach scene in Monte Carlo isn't that great compared to many other Riviera towns, but there are plenty of places within a relatively short ride.

Mykonos/Delos, Greece

These two Aegean islands are less than 10 miles apart but are about as different from one another as they possibly could be. Mykonos (also known as Hora) covers 35 square miles and has only 4,000 residents, while tiny Delos covers about one square mile and consists entirely of an ancient historic site. No one (except for a caretaker) lives on Delos. It is rare for cruise ships to call directly on Delos, but there are excursions from Mykonos either through your cruise line or via the local ferry service. Mykonos is one of those sun-drenched isles

that is typical of the Greek Islands; those pictures of Greece in travel brochures are usually taken on Mykonos.

Arrival: It is very rare for a cruise ship to call directly on Delos. The standard procedure is for ships to drop anchor outside the small Mykonos harbor, and passengers tender into shore. Those wishing to visit Delos can go by tender or tour boat, either directly from their ship or from the shore in Mykonos. The Mykonos dock is only steps away from the center of town. On Delos, a walk of just a few minutes from the dock will bring visitors into the heart of the historic area. Neither dock has any facilities, but everything is close by on Mykonos.

Tourism Information Office: There is no official tourist office in either location. Inquiries in Mykonos can be made at the Tourist Police office near the ferry pier and on Delos at the museum.

Getting Around: Walking is the only good way to explore Mykonos town, although taxis are available. There are relatively few sights of interest in other parts of the island, although some visitors like to head out to one of the lovely beaches. This can be done either by arranging shore excursions on your ship (which are just transportation to and from the beach) or by taking a local bus or taxi. There is no transportation of any kind on Delos. Touring the ancient site is strictly by foot. However, you might want to consider signing up for a shore excursion that includes transportation to and from the island because it will incorporate a guided walking tour of the site.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: A one-day port call is well-suited to visiting both Mykanos and Delos, as each has about a half-day's worth of sightseeing time. The greatest attraction on Mykonos isn't even a particular site but, rather, the general atmosphere of the island. As mentioned at the outset, this is a typical idyllic Greek island. Its town is filled with white-washed buildings glistening in the splendor of the sun and the surrounding blue waters of the Aegean. The brightly painted domes (mostly blue) of local churches are about the only exceptions to the otherwise almost universally white buildings. The town has very narrow streets filled with merchants; see the details under *Shopping*. It's easy to get a little lost in the maze of streets and even a map doesn't offer much help. Remember that you can always work your way back to the waterfront and walk around the edge of the town to the port. Within the town are several so-so museums. The **Archaeological Museum** is near the center and has some items from Delos as well as a series of reliefs illustrating the Trojan War. *Ayios Stefanos; open daily except Monday, 8:30 am until 3 pm; $.* The **Craft and Folklore Museum** has all sorts of things

representative of the local culture but, unfortunately, is open only in the evening when your ship is likely to have already departed. *Kastro; open nightly, 5:30-8:30 pm (from 6:30 pm on Sunday); $.* Two other museums of interest are the **Aegean Maritime Museum**, *Tria Pigadia, open daily, 10:30 am-1 pm and 6:30-9 pm*; and the **Agricultural Museum**, set in a renovated windmill on Agiou Ioannou. *Open daily, 4-6 pm.* The museums are small and it doesn't take much time to see all of them. Speaking of windmills, Mykonos has several famous but defunct thatched-roof **windmills**, located near the edge of town southwest of the harbor. They make a nice photo op. So, too, does the even more famous **Church of Pangia Paraportiani**, along the waterfront not far from the harbor in an area of town known as Little Venice. This is one of the most photographed places in the Aegean.

Delos gained importance in 478 BC when the Delian League, an association of Greek city states, was founded and its headquarters placed on the island. Although the island was nominally independent for a time, it was, like the entire league, dominated by Athens. It managed to thrive under most who ruled it, including the Romans, until 88 BC when it was sacked during the Mithraditic War. It never recovered and was essentially abandoned. Excavation of the island began in the 1870s and today's site is a trip back to Delos of the second century BC. Many of the structures are in good condition, although all that is left of many are the floor and some partial columns. The House of Bacchus and the House of Cleopatra (both misnomers) are good examples of the homes of wealthy residents. You can get a good idea of how the average person lived as you walk along some of the well-preserved narrow residential streets. If you have the ambition to climb to the top of 368-foot **Mt. Kynthos**, you'll be rewarded with outstanding views of the ruins, the surrounding sea, and Mykonos in the distance. There are also some ruins at the top. The ascent is via a combination of trail and stairs. Back down below towards the northern end of the ruins area is Delos' small but excellent **museum**, which features items that have been found on the island. Among the artifacts are many of the original stone lions that once lined the Avenue of the Lions. The historic area will always be open when your ship calls. If you are going to Delos on your own, allow about three to four hours for the excursion, including the short round-trip boat ride. (Thus, if your time is short, you may be better off on a guided excursion rather than taking a chance of missing your ship's departure.)

For those traveling to Delos on their own, the site is open daily except Monday from 9 am to 3 pm; $. Boats leave every 30 to 45 minutes beginning at 9 am through 12:50 pm and return from 12:20 pm through 3 pm; $$ round-trip.

Shopping: Mykonos has numerous shops of all kinds along the streets radiating from the small plaza adjacent to the harbor. Gold jewelry is an especially popular item here since it is said you can get a great buy. Other featured items include sweaters and woven clothing. Shopping is one of the main attractions in this port of call, so learn to bargain. Besides local shops, you'll find some of the big international names here. The only "shopping" on Delos is the gift shop at the museum.

Sports & Recreation: There are several good beaches on Mykonos. **Megali Ammos** is the nearest to town, about a half-mile past the windmills, so you have the option of walking to this one. However, **St. Stephens Beach** is nicer and better still is **Paradise Beach**. These must be reached by taxi, local bus, or transportation provided by your cruise line. Buses run fairly frequently and are inexpensive, but be sure to check the schedule to make sure that you can return to your ship in time for departure. Diving and windsailing are other recreational options.

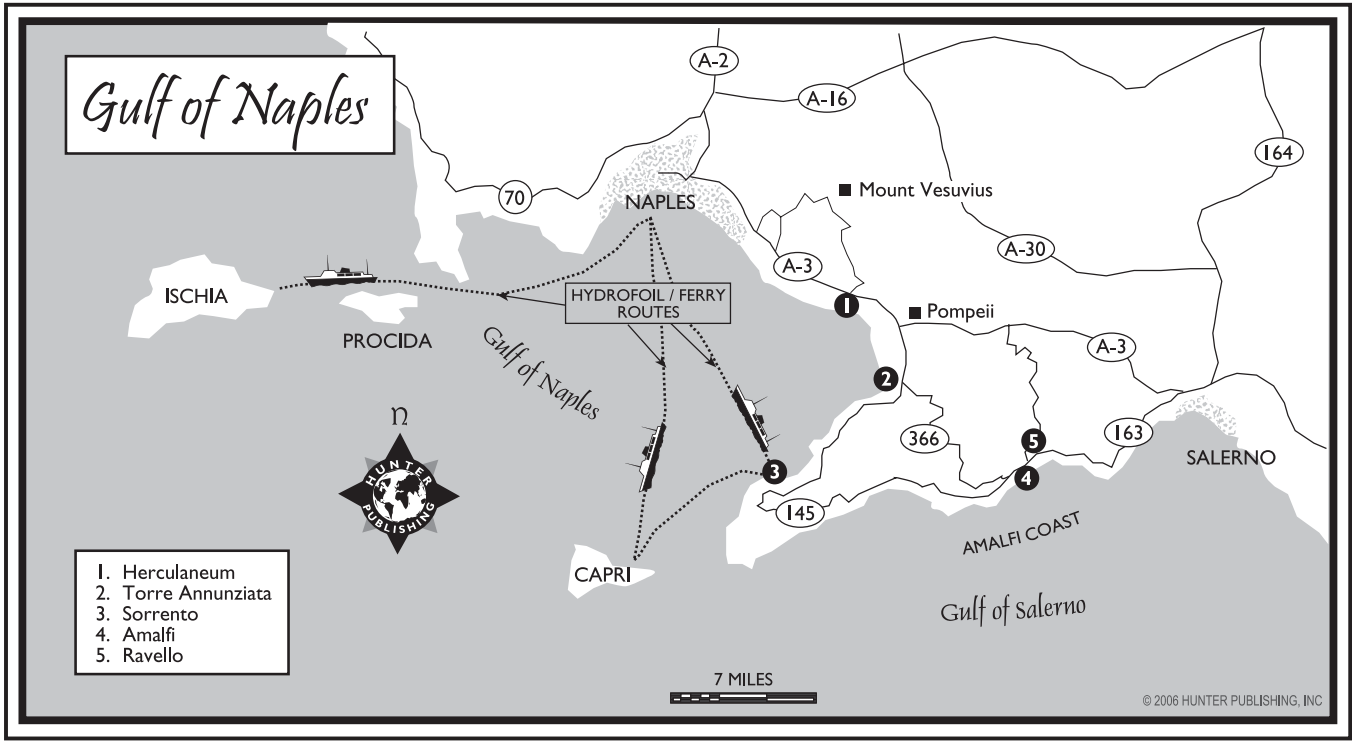
Naples/Capri, Italy

The beautiful Isle of Capri is almost 20 miles offshore from the harbor at Naples. Many ships stop at Naples while only a few call directly at Capri. Regardless of which one your ship pulls into, you can opt to explore the one that interests you most. Even better, the usually long port calls at Naples allows enough time to do some of both. The biggest problem is choosing what to do, since there is no way that you can see all of the sights in a single day. Visitors to Naples are often most interested in heading out to see the famous ruins of Pompeii.

Arrival: The Maritime Station in Naples is one of the biggest ports in the Mediterranean and can easily accommodate the largest of cruise liners, so there is direct access to the passenger terminal and its extensive facilities. Even better is that you will find yourself right in the heart of the city in close proximity to its most important attractions. Should you decide to explore farther afield on your own, the railroad station with trains to Pompeii is about three miles from the port. Taxis are plentiful and the metro is in walking distance. On the other hand, the port of Capri is small and you'll have to use tender service to get to the shore.

Tourism Information Office: Naples: Piazza Trento e Trieste, ☎ (081) 405 3118; Capri: Marina Grande, ☎ (081) 837-0634.

Getting Around: In Naples, most of the important sights are fairly close to the cruise ship dock and you can walk to them. Buses are plentiful, but a knowledge of Italian would be helpful in making sure



PORTS OF CALL

you get the right one. Therefore, taxis are a better idea for longer distances (but make sure the driver has the meter on and understands where you want to go). The metro system has two lines that can be of limited use. The sightseeing tour will mention where they might be handy. There are a few attractions farther away from the port and city center areas that can be reached by the metro system. Despite a massive face-lift over the past few years and a concerted effort to clean up the city's image, there is still more poverty and crime in Naples than in most other places in Italy (or elsewhere in the Mediterranean). Be especially careful about protecting your valuables at all times, but especially if using public transportation. Also, stick to the routes I've outlined in the *Sightseeing* section. Many people will not even spend time touring Naples but, instead, will head out of town to see the myriad sights. These are most conveniently seen by shore excursion, although there is good train service between Naples and Pompeii. Car rentals are also a good way to get around if you are leaving town. On Capri you should plan on taking a shore excursion for sights that can't be reached on foot. Those who opt for independent travel can utilize taxis or local buses in addition to walking (there are no rental cars on Capri but they will hardly be missed given that the tiny Isola di Capri is less than four miles long and under two wide).You can even take a fast ferry or hydrofoil between Naples and Capri, Naples and Sorrento, and Capri and Sorrento. If traveling by this method on your own, be sure to study timetables and make sure you have enough time to get back to your ship.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Even though the area's best sights may not be in Naples, it would be wrong to assume that the city itself has nothing to offer. A full day in Naples can easily be enjoyed, given the large number of attractions. I'll list the city sights separately from the surrounding areas (including Capri). Each one is a full day as shown but, again, you can pick and choose from the three options (don't forget to take into account extra travel time).

Naples One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Stretching for miles along the beautiful bay of the same name, Naples has one of the most dramatic settings of any major city. It is home to more than a million people. Unfortunately, the city center lacks the charm of other European cities. Much of it is run-down and not attractive. On a more positive note, much of what Naples does have to offer is conveniently grouped together in a short distance of the port.

The first part of the tour begins near where your ship will be docked. Start at the **Piazza Municipio** and its town hall. Taking a clockwise direction, the next attraction is the large **New Castle** (Castel Nuovo). The "new" in the name is far from true, since the entire structure dates back to the 14th century. The triumphal arch at the entrance is the most notable architectural feature, and inside you'll find the

decent **Museo Civico**, which focuses on the long and fascinating history of Naples. *Piazza Municipio; open daily, 9 am to 7 pm (until 2 pm on Sunday); $$.* Across the street is the **Palazzo Reale**, set in the large and attractive square known as the **Piazza Plebiscito**. The palace was built in the early part of the 17th century, and much has been rebuilt since the end of World War II. It was the former residence of the kings of Savoy and now contains a museum. This is one of the more elaborate palaces in southern Italy. The royal apartments are a highlight, as are the many tapestries and other works of art in the museum section. *Open daily except Wednesday, 9 am to 8 pm; $$.* Adjacent to the Piazza Plebiscito is the Piazza Trento e Trieste. In this vicinity you will find the cross-shaped **Galleria Umberto I**, one of the earliest enclosed shopping centers. It was built in the 1890s and, with its glass roof, resembles an even more famous center of similar style in Milan. South of the Piazza Plebiscito by way of Via Console and Via Santa Lucia will lead you through the area of the city known as **Santa Lucia**. This is the real "old town" of Naples and is the one place that has some charm. At the tip you'll cross a bridge to a small island that continues the old world atmosphere and is home to the waterfront **Castel dell'Ovo** (Castle of the Egg), so-called because of its shape. *Borgo Marinaro. Open daily, 9 am to 6 pm (until 1 pm on Saturday and Sunday).*

Retrace your route to the Piazza Trento e Trieste and take the **Funiculare Centrale** to the Piazza Fuga. This is one of several funiculars in Naples that residents use daily in their commutes to work or shop, but for visitors they provide an extra little thrill along with spectacular views in addition to being a great way to avoid climbing some of the steep and high hills. Just east from here is the **Castel Sant'Elmo**. Built by the Spaniards in the early 16th century, the star-shaped fortress has mostly served as a prison. Besides the impressive fortifications, a primary reason to come here is for the stunning views. *Largo San Marino. Open daily except Monday, 8:30 am to 7:30 pm; $.* Near the castle is the **Museo Nazionale di San Martino**. Part of a 14th-century monastery that is in itself a worthy site, the museum has an interesting collection of historic items concentrating on the maritime history of the area. *Via Tito Angelini. Open daily except Monday, 8:30 am to 7:30 pm; $$.* On the northwest side of the Castel take the Funiculare di Montesanto down the hill. From here it's a long walk to the next attraction, so it would be a good idea to hop the metro at Montesanto staion and take it to Cavour station. From there, walk south on Via Duomo to Naple's **cathedral**, which has seen numerous reconstructions and alterations over the centuries. It is most notable for its large size and the elaborate decorated ceiling above the main nave. However, some of the smaller chapels are more beautiful and are of greater interest. *Via del Duomo; open*

Monday through Saturday, 8 am to 12:30 pm and 4:30-7:30 pm (half-hour later opening and closing on Sunday). From north of the cathedral, take Via della Sapienza west to Via Santa Teresa and turn right. You'll soon reach the **National Archaeological Museum** (Museo Archaeologico Nazionale), one of the world's best museums on Greco-Roman culture. Many of the original works of art found in Pompeii and Herculaneum are displayed here. *Piazza Museo; open daily except Tuesday, 9am to 7:30 pm; $$.* Finally, if you have another 90 minutes, about a mile north of the archaeological museum (take a taxi) is the **Palazzo Reale di Capodimonte**. An extravagant 18th-century palace, the museum has an outstanding collection of artwork. The palace itself is surrounded by a marvelous park that was originally a royal hunting ground. *Open daily except Monday, 8:30am to 7:30 pm; $$.*

It's doubtful whether this tour will leave any additional free time. However, if you're interested in exploring beautiful old churches, there are many to choose from. Most are in the vicinity around the cathedral; two of the better ones are along Via Capitelli. **Chiesa di Santa Chiarahe** is a fine example of baroque architecture as interpreted in southern Italy, while **Chiesa di Gesù Nuovo** has distinctive Gothic influences. Alternatively, if you have children you might be better off spending some time in the **Aquarium** *(Villa Commune, daily from 9 am to 6 pm but 9:30am to 7 pm on Sunday; $$)* or the **Cittá della Scienza**, a fine interactive science museum and planetarium. Via Coroglio 104. *Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm (except on Sunday, when hours are 10 am to 7 pm); $$$$.*

Capri One-Day Sightseeing Tour: The celebrated Isle of Capri is approximately 20 miles from Naples and less than five miles from Sorrento (if your ship happens to stop there also, consider visiting Capri from that port). From Naples, the fastest way to reach Capri is by hydrofoil, which leave at regular intervals from the Molo Beverello, opposite the Castel Nuovo and not far from the main port. Boat rides from Sorrento take only a few minutes and depart just a few steps from where you set foot on land. On Capri, all boats (including tenders from your cruise ship if Capri is the actual port of call) arrive at the Marina Grande beneath the town of Capri. The view as you approach is stunning. The main areas of interest are the towns of Capri and Anacapri, along with the famous Blue Grotto and the Villa Jovis. The town of Capri sits high above the port and the easiest and most fun way of getting there is by the steep funicular railway. The town has only a few thousand people and it won't take that long to wander around its narrow streets. It is a place where time has stood still in many respects. You can stop by any of the several churches here for a quick look and also visit the **Museum of Capri** (Museo del Centro Caprese i Cerio), which has a collection of items

found on the island that date back to Neolithic times. *Piazzetia Cerio 5. Open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, 10 am to 1 pm, Thursday, 3 to 7 pm; $.* The best sight in town is the **Gardens of Augustus**, not because the gardens are so special (although they're quite attractive), but because from this vantage point you get a great view of the rocky island of **Faraglioni** that lies to the south. The gardens are about a quarter-mile walk from Piazza Umberto I, the center of Capri town. *Via Matteotti; open daily, dawn to dusk.* Less than 1½ miles east of town is **Villa Jovis**, once the home of Emperor Tiberius. Back in Roman times there were many large villas – even then, people recognized the special qualities of Capri. Villa Jovis is the best preserved and largest of all the ancient villas on the island. However, there remains only a fraction of the original villa's many buildings. Nonetheless, it is an interesting place to visit. *Via Tiberio; open daily, 9 am to an hour before sunset, $.* **Anacapri** doesn't offer as many sights, although there is another Roman villa here, **Villa San Michele**. *Viale Axel Munthe. Open daily, 9 am to 6 pm; $$.* Of more appeal in Anacapri is the chairlift that begins at the town's main square and rises to the peak of **Monte Solara**. At 1,914 feet, it is the highest point on the island and offers wonderful panoramas in any direction. *Piazza Vittoria. Operates daily, 9:30 am until sunset; $$.*

The island of Capri has many **sea caves** (or grottoes), but none is as spectacular as the well-known **Blue Grotto** (Grotta Azzura). The Romans knew about the Blue Grotto, but it wasn't "discovered" by modern visitors until the early part of the 19th century. The only opening is nine feet high and sunlight coming through this hole is responsible for creating the unique color. This is one of the most beautiful sights you could imagine and even the crowds and the limited time you're allowed to see it can't spoil it. The grotto can be reached by boat from Capri or by bus from Anacapri. Either way, you'll wind up on a rowboat since motorized vessels aren't allowed into the grotto itself. *Open daily, 9 am until one hour before sunset; $$$$ including boat fare.*

Pompeii and other areas around Naples: The most popular excursion from Naples (at least for those staying on the mainland) is the 20-mile journey from the center of Naples to **Pompeii**. You can avoid the generally high-priced excursions to Pompeii by taking a bus or train (faster but somewhat more expensive than the bus). If you rent a car, most of the short ride is on a modern toll highway. Pompeii was a wealthy Roman resort town before it was buried by the volcanic eruption of nearby Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. Although it was a great disaster, the volcanic ash and rock proved to be a wonderful preservative and excavations in this century (still ongoing) have revealed many details of Roman life at that time. You don't feel you are in a dead city – given the number of visitors, it is very much alive –

and it is easy to picture yourself strolling through town during the days of antiquity. In addition to the temples, baths, theaters and other public facilities that are most frequently seen in ancient sites throughout Europe, Pompeii is notable for the number of well-preserved homes. They were owned by the richest class of Roman citizens at that time. *Open daily, 8:30 am to 7:30 pm; $$$.* Less famous than Pompeii is **Herculaneum**, even closer to Naples. The ruins here are far less extensive than those at Pompeii. Since you only have a day, it would make better use of your time to do only Pompeii. The one advantage of Herculaneum is that it offers a better view of Mt. Vesuvius. *Same hours and price as Pompeii.* Excursions to **Mount Vesuvius** are also popular. You can drive up on your own, or take a bus from either Pompeii or Herculaneum in addition to the guided shore excursion option. The actual site is about a mile from where the bus leaves you; you can get somewhat closer with a car if you rented one. There are many hiking trails here, but on a day shore visit you'll probably have time only for a quick look at the crater before heading back down. You must hire a guide to go into the crater itself.

Other area sights are in the opposite direction. Just west of Naples is **Campi Flegrei**, an area of volcanic activity that reveals bubbling muddy waters and the strong aroma of sulphur. It is easy to see why the ancient Greeks and Romans thought that this area was the entrance to the underworld. Within Campi Flegrei (Fiery Fields), and of most interest to visitors, is the **Solfatara Crater**. *Open daily, 8:30 am to an hour before sunset; $$*. The preceding sight is mildly interesting but doesn't compare to a trip to Pompei. On the other hand, **Cumae** is a fascinating place. It is what remains of a Roman resort town that now lies about 300 feet beneath the sea. It is visible via glass bottom boat tours that leave from Naples. By road it is 10 miles west of the city. *Via Montecumae. Open daily, 9 am until two hours before sunset; $$. Additional fee for boat transportation.*

Finally, if your cruise itinerary's only port of call in the area is Naples, you can use the time on shore to get to either **Salerno** or **Sorrento** (both of which are described in this book). Each is approximately 40 miles from Naples. If you decide to make either trip, however, you'll have to forfeit almost everything else that Naples and Capri have to offer. If you're traveling from one to the other by land, Pompeii is en route, so you could include that as part of your day.

Shopping*:* Capri, Pompeii and other areas around Naples are not the best for shopping unless you're looking for cheap souvenirs. These you'll find around all of the popular tourist attractions. For more serious shopping you'll have to stay in Naples where the best shops will be found in the **Santa Lucia** area. **Gold jewelry** is a big item. Another good shopping area is along **Via Roma** and **Via Toledo**. This is the

same street, but it changes name. It roughly connects Piazza dei Plebiscito with Piazza Dante. For a more down-scale shopping experience, try one of the city's many markets. The best one is in huge **Piazza Garibaldi**, which fronts the central station. Line 2 of the metro can take you there.

Sports & Recreation: Despite the abundance of water, this area is not known for its beaches and I suggest you avoid them. I'm sure that some ports on your cruise that are less sight-oriented and have better facilities.

Návplion, Greece

Also referred to as Nafplio and Nauplion, this town is situated on the east coast of the Peloponnese. It is one of the more interesting Greek mainland ports. It's becoming a more common cruise ship stop, both because of the numerous sights in the town itself and its proximity to some of the most important ancient archaeological sites in all of Greece. Návplion is itself of historic importance because of its strategic location on a small promontory overlooking the Argolic Gulf. For a short time after the independence of Greece in the 19th century, it actually served as the national capital. Today it is a mostly quiet town of about 14,000 people, except for the many visitors it receives.

Arrival: All cruise ships will anchor in the harbor and passengers will transfer to town by tender. Once there, you will be close to the city center and all of the in-town points of interest.

Tourism Information Office: 25 Martiou, ☎ (2752) 024 444.

Getting Around: In Návplion, there is no need for any form of transportation other than your feet (except for one possible taxi ride to a somewhat difficult to reach fortress, described shortly). However, if you are going to be exploring the ancient sites, it is strongly recommended that you do so by the shore excursion route since public transportation is limited and the cost of taxis would be prohibitive.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Many of the shore excursions to the ancient sites will take a full day, so you have to make a decision as to whether you want to stay in Návplion or go exploring ancient Greece. Although the latter is probably more interesting, your decision depends on your personal interests and, to a large degree, what you will be seeing elsewhere during your cruise. Variety, after all, is the spice of life. It may be possible to choose excursions that also allow you some time on your own in Návplion. We'll begin our touring options with the town itself. Everything of interest is on the small promontory that comprises the heart of the city. There are two good museums. The first is the **Folklore Foundation Museum**, which con-

centrates mostly on the traditional methods of producing textiles. *Vasileos Alexandros 1, open daily except Tuesday, 9 am to 3 pm; $.* The **Archaelogical Museum** has what can be termed a standard collection of artifacts for museums of this type. However, since it is housed in a former 18th-century Venetian arsenal, the building is also worth a look. *Plateia Syntagmatos, open daily except Monday from 8:30 am to 3 pm*. There are three fortresses associated with the town's history. The first, and smallest, is the **Bourtzi**. While it isn't as impressive as the two that will be described shortly, it has the advantage of being on a small off-shore island about a half-mile from the mainland. You can get there via boats that leave regularly from the Akti Minoul, $ for round-trip boat fare. Working our way up in size, the next military structure is at the western tip of the promontory. The **Akronafplia Fortress** is the oldest of the three. Evidence indicates that there were fortifications on this site going back to the Bronze Age. Inside the compound are several hotels, but the walls are impressive and so are the views. Fun, too, is getting to the fortress, which is reached by gong through a tunnel and ascending an elevator. *Tunnel entrance on Plateia Nosokomiou.* The third and grandest of the trio is the vast citadel known as the **Palamidi Fortress**. This one sits majestically atop a 650-foot-high rock at the edge of the promontory from which there are spectacular views. Also spectacular is the fine military architecture. There are two ways to get to the top of the rock. You can walk up the steps which begin off of 25 Maritou near the tourist office. Although local lore says there are 999 steps, the count is fewer than that. Nonetheless, it is very exerting and those who aren't in good shape are advised not to use this route. The alternative is to take a taxi up the road that winds its way two miles up to the fortress. *Open daily from 8 am to 6:45 pm; $$.*

Návplion is an excellent base for excursions to at least four important nearby ancient sites. In the approximately 60 miles between Návplion and the modern town of Corinth are Tiryns, Mycenae, Acrocorinth and Ancient Corinth. How many you see depends on how long your ship will be in port and the available shore excursions. Some excursions may also visit the **Corinth Canal** (see the sidebar at the end of this port description). The sites are listed here in the order they will be reached from Návplion.

Tiryns: This is considered to be the epitome of Mycenaean civilization and architecture and is known for its massiveness. The ruins contain many large structures that can be explored. Tiryns is a World Heritage Site. *Open daily from 8 am to 8 pm; $.*

Mycenae: This ancient city was described by Homer in the *Iliad and Odyssey.* The city dates from before 2000 BC and was the most important city of the Mycenaean kingdom, which was destroyed

around 1200 BC. The ruins were discovered by Heinrich Schliemann in the 1870s, already noted for his discoveries at Troy. It is at the edge of some mountains which nicely enhance the atmosphere. Mycenae was a large walled citadel enclosing many structures. Even today the site is vast and contains many buildings that you can enter. Of special note are the entryway (the Lion Gate), the Palace of Agamemnon with its throne room, and the Treasury of Atreus which was the tomb of Agamemnon. There are also beautiful plazas and many burial areas. Like Tiyrins, this is a World Heritage Site. *Open daily from 8 am to 7 pm; $$.*

Acrocorinth: This site comes chronologically after Ancient Corinth. The Corinthians came here after Corinth was no longer able to sustain them because of earthquake damage and continuing invasions. This is another massive fortress city although not all of it dates from ancient times; the Byzantines, Venetians and Turks all modified and added to it. In some ways, that makes it even more interesting and differentiates it from the other sites. The Temple of Aphroidite is a highlight, even though the ruins are sparse. The views from it are outstanding. *Open daily except Monday from 8 am to 7 pm, $.*

Ancient Corinth: Closest of the ruins to the modern town of Corinth (which has little to offer visitors other than its setting), what you see today was not built by the ancient Corinthians. It mostly dates from the time of Roman rule. There are many impressive structures left, including the large market (*agora*) and the Temple of Apollo. There is also a good museum on the site*. Open daily from 8 am to 7 pm; $$.*

Shopping: Opportunities for shopping are limited in Návplion, although souvenirs can be found throughout the town and adjacent to the ancient sites.

Sports & Recreation: **Aravanitia** is a small beach south of Návplion town below the Palamlidi Fortress, which makes for an interesting atmosphere. **Karathona** is a nicer beach and it's just a short taxi ride away.

THE CORINTH CANAL

The Peloponnese region of Greece is almost an island as the broad **Gulf of Corinth** separates it from Central Greece. The only place where it is attached is at the four-mile wide **Isthmus of Corinth**. On the eastern side of the isthmus is the **Saronic Gulf**. It's a long boat trip around the Peloponnese, especially so during ancient times. Even then the isthmus was of interest as a means of transit. A canal was proposed in the seventh century BC, but the technical problems were too great. So they built a paved route where

ships could be removed from the water and then pulled by their crews across the isthmus in order to avoid the long journey around the Peloponnese. The Romans under Nero actually began to work on a canal but the project was halted owing to pressing military concerns elsewhere. The **Corinth Canal** was finally built by a French firm and was completed in 1893. The nearly four-mile canal is 75 feet wide, which precludes it from being used by cruise ships (except for some of the luxury-yacht-type vessels). If you can, it is an interesting sight to watch ships pass through it.

Nessebur, Bulgaria

A few years ago, Nessebur (sometimes Nesebâr, depending upon who is doing the transliteration from the Cyrillic alphabet) was not a major port of call. The cruise lines have recently decided to come here more often than they do to Contsanta. But based upon the amount of things to see, this isn't a wise choice in my opinion. Nonetheless, a day here can be quite a pleasant experience. Nessebur ranks as one of the smallest ports of call from a population standpoint – it has fewer than 10,000 residents.

Arrival: You'll have to come into town by tender but everything is close by once you get here.

Tourism Information Office: There is no official tourist office, but you will be able to find information at the dock.

Getting Around: Nessebur sits on a small, rocky island that is linked to the mainland by a causeway. It is well under a mile from one end of town to the other. That makes foot-power the best means of getting around if you're remaining in town (but see the *Sports & Recreation* section for information about getting to some of the beaches).

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Most attractions are on or just off of the major street, the **ul Mesembria**. The main points of interest are the many beautiful churches. The oldest (which is in ruins but still fascinating to visit) is the sixth-century **Basilica**, *ul MItropolitska. (Most churches are open all day, everyday).* The 14th-century **Pantokrator** and **St. John Aliturgetos** (on, respectively, ul Mesembria and ul Mena) are lovely. The former is known for its bell tower. Perhaps the most unique aspect of Nessebur's churches are the fine murals that cover many walls. These are best exemplified in the 10th-century **Church of St. John the Baptist**, *ul Mitropolitska*; **St. Spa's**, *ul Aheloi, open daily, 10 am-1 pm and 2-5:30 pm (no afternoon*

hours on Saturday and Sunday), $; and **St. Stefan**, *ul Ribarska, daily, 9 am-noon and 2-6 pm, $.*

Besides the churches Nessebur offers a decent **archaeological museum**, *ul Mesembria 2; open daily except Sunday, 9 am-1:30 pm and 2-9 pm; $*. Of greater interest are the displays on Bulgarian culture at the **ethnographic museum**, *ul Mesembria 32, open daily, 10 am-2 pm and 3-6pm; $.* Finally, the remains of a small section of the town's original **walls** are at the western end of ul Mesembria.

There are several excursion possibilities. Varna is a more interesting place, but is fairly distant. Your cruise ship might offer trips there. Much closer is the town of **Burgas**, less than 25 miles from Nessebur. It has some museums that don't cover ground much different than those in Nessebur but because it is a much larger place, those who want to shop might find it of interest.

Shopping: The pickings are slim not only because it's such a small town but because it isn't geared towards tourism, despite the increasing number of cruise ships that call there.

Sports & Recreation: There are several beaches on the small island that is Nessebur, but these are kind of rocky and aren't the most comfortable places to soak up the sun. There are much nicer beaches along the mainland, especially in **Slanskev Bryag**, about two miles west of town. It's likely that a shore excursion will offer transportation to the beaches in that area, but you can also get there on your own by bus or taxi. Even more fun is to take the water taxi that leaves from the small pier just north of the town's western gate.

THE BLACK SEA

The Black Sea region is not strictly a part of the Mediterranean. It is separated from the Aegean by a distance of only 120 miles via the famous water route through the Dardanelles and Bosporus. Few cruises (and none by the major cruise lines) sail entirely in the confines of the Black Sea. Instead, Black Sea ports are added to many eastern Mediterranean itineraries. This has become even more common since the cruise lines stopped going, at least for the time being, to the Holy Land. Because of this, and the many beautiful sights that this area is home to, the Black Sea is part of our Mediterranean exploration.

Since many Americans are even less familiar with this region than other parts of the Mediterranean, here's a brief rundown of Black Sea ports by country. Besides Constanta in Romania, the Black Sea ports encountered on cruises include Nessebur and Varna in Bulgaria; Odesa, Sevastopol

and Yalta in the Ukraine; and Sochi in Russia. The northern coast of Turkey also borders on the Black Sea but doesn't have any ports that cruise ships call on.

Nice/Villefranche, France

These two ports are so close together that no cruise ship would ever bother to call on both. It doesn't matter which one your itinerary stops at, because it's easy enough to get from one to the other. Fashionable Nice is considered the unofficial "capital" of the French Riviera. Considering that, along with the size of Nice (the fifth-biggest city in France) as compared to most Riviera ports, its beach certainly isn't one of the more attractive playgrounds. But don't be disappointed because there are far better things to see and do when in port. Villefranche, just six miles away, is a more laid back place that can be characterized as quaint.

Arrival: The harbor in Nice is fairly large but can only handle ships up to about 625 feet in length which, these days, rules out the overwhelming majority of cruise ships. Draft limitations (28 feet) are less of a problem. Tenders will bring you into the dock and you'll be in the heart of the city as soon as you step onto terra firma. In Villefranche, you will always have to tender in, but you will be dropped off just a short walk from the city center.

Tourism Information Office: Nice: 5 Promenade des Anglais, ☎ (04) 9214 4800. Villefranche doesn't have a tourist office, but information is available from numerous shops and kiosks around the port area.

Getting Around: In Nice most attractions are within walking distance of the port and one another. Several others are about two miles away. While this is walking distance for some, others will find it too much and so a taxi will be in order. Shore excursions aren't necessary for those who are going to remain in Nice. The train station is two miles from the port, and anyone who plans to travel to other Riviera destinations by train on their own should have little trouble getting to the rails. Villefranche, with its small size, is ideal for walking but taxis are available. The train station there is about a half-mile from the port.

Nice One-Day Sightseeing Tour: The area known as **Vieux Nice**, near the port, is a good place for strolling. It is the most charming part of the city. You can begin by exploring the promontory that contains the pretty **Parc du Château**, which has good views from the **Belland Tower**. If you don't want to walk up the hill to get there,

take the elevator just beneath the tower. Wandering around Vieux Nice has its rewards, including about a half-dozen very elaborate ecclesiastical structures. You'll find that each one seems to get even more eye-popping. Among the best are the **Cathédrale Ste-Réparate**, the **Chapelle de la Misericorde, Chapelle de l'Annunciation**, and the **Chapelle St-Jacques-Jesu**. Also of interest in Vieux Nice are the many arcaded plazas built to protect residents from the elements. On the northwest side of Vieux Nice is the park-like Promenade du Paillon which, heading west, winds up at the pretty **Albert I Garden**. Just northwest of Vieux Nice by Place Garibaldi is the fine **Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art** that houses an astounding collection of works from the 1960s on. Even if you don't usually admire this genre of art, you're almost sure to find at least part of the collection of interest. *Promenade des Arts; open daily except Tuesday, 10 am until 6 pm; $$.* Not far from the old town is the waterside **Promenade de Anglais**. Strolling this fine avenue is a must-do attraction for visitors. This is where the resorts are along with the well-heeled travelers who come to Nice to be seen.

Nice's other sights are located farther from the waterfront. To begin exploring them, start at the main train station (Gare Nice Ville). Adjacent to the train station is the **Cathedral of St. Nichola**s. This Russian Orthodox church and its six onion-shaped domes look entirely out of place in these surroundings. Nonetheless, in a context of its own, it is a beautiful sight. *Ave. Nicolas II; open daily, 9:30 am to noon and 2:30-5:30 pm (no afternoon opening on Sunday); $.* Farther northwest of the station in an area of Nice known as the Cimiez, a hilltop area that overlooks the lower portion of Nice, is the excellent **Chagall Museum** (Musée Chagall). Marc Chagall is best known for his paintings of scenes from the Old Testament and his vivid style is hard to beat. *4 Ave. Dr. Ménard; open daily except Tuesday, 10 am to 6 pm; $$.* Also in Cimiez via Boulevard de Cimiez is the **Matisse Museum** (Musée Matisse), which houses the works of Henri Matisse. *164 Ave. des Arènes de Cimiez; open daily except Tuesday, 10 am to 6 pm; $$.* Right next door is the **Archaeology Museum** (same hours and prices as the Matisse Museum), a decent facility with some interesting Roman artifacts and some smaller ruins. Among the latter are the remains of public baths and a well-preserved amphitheater.

One other interesting museum in Nice is the **Musée des Beaux Arts Jules-Chiret**, which has a good collection of art. However, the 19th-century mansion that houses it is even more of an attraction. *33 Avenue des Baumettes, open daily except Monday, 10 am to 6 pm; $$.*

Villefranche One-Day Sightseeing Tour: The town is between Nice and Monte Carlo. Although I've included it here with Nice because that is even closer, excursions or on-your-own trips from Monte

Carlo are also possible. Any trip out of Villefranche becomes a pretty journey because of its location on one of the nicest stretches of the **Grand Corniche**, a series of mountain roads that offer spectacular views of the coast and its small towns. The Grand Corniche is divided into the Upper, Middle and Lower Corniche roads. Villefranche itself is a delightful little place with one of the loveliest settings in the area. Villefranche originated as a fishing village and largely retains that status. The old city dates from the 14th century and is a wonderful place for walking, especially around the covered **rue Obscure**. Many of the streets here are actually steps, which attest to Villefranche's dramatic location. The 16th-century **Citadelle** now serves as the town hall. On weekdays, visitors can walk through the lovely grounds and see some of the artwork in the various salons.

Shopping: Nice has a huge variety of shops in all price ranges but they tend towards the upscale. For something a little different, try the **antique market** in Place Robilante in Vieux Nice, open Tuesday through Saturday.

Sports & Recreation: Lying just east of the nearby Vieux Nice along the Promenade des Anglais is Nice's beach. It isn't that great a spot because it has pebbles underfoot rather than sand. Nonetheless, it is always jammed. There are private and public sections interspersed along the bay. All kinds of **watersports** are offered, from parasailing to jet-skiing and anything and everything in-between. There are numerous operators along the Promenade or you might want to choose one from your shore excursion office.

A CHARMING LITTLE RIVIERA SIDE-TRIP

While the port descriptions have concentrated on those places where cruise ships dock or anchor in the harbor, some of the most beautiful scenery and charming towns are between the major tourist localities along the Corniche Roads. One such place is **Eze**, a delightful little town that is on a steep mountainside more than 1,300 feet above the Mediterranean. Streets and steps wind through the flower-bedecked town that is something of an artist's community. The **Jardin Exotique** has a marvelous collection of cactii in addition to views that are nothing less than spectacular. Eze is only seven miles east of Nice and five miles west of Monte Carlo, which means that even if you don't rent or car or get here by shore excursion (rare, according to my research), you can take a taxi and it won't bust your budget.

Odesa, Ukraine

This interesting city (alternatively spelled *Odessa*), makes a good day-long destination. It is believed to have been the site of an ancient Greek colony. What is definitely known is that the site was a Tatar trading post in the 14th century. Today it is a major commercial port and manufacturing center with a population of just under a million. Because of the mild climate, it has also become one of the more important resort areas on the Black Sea.

Arrival: The relatively modern seaport facility (Morsky Vokzal) can handle most of the ships calling at Odesa so there's little chance you'll have to use a tender to get ashore. The port is only a few blocks from the heart of the city.

Tourism Information Office: vulitsya Derybasivska 13, ☎ (0482) 223-983.

Getting Around: Almost all of the worthwhile attractions are within walking distance. For those places that are farther away, buses, trams and taxis are available. Although you can easily see Odesa on your own, keep in mind that tourism and its related services aren't yet well developed in the Ukraine, and you may feel more comfortable with a guided shore excursion.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: An on-your-own tour begins right across the street from the ship terminal where you'll immediately encounter the famous **Potemkin Steps** (all 192 of them). These lead up to the attractive street known as **Prymorsky Bulvar**, where there's a statue of Richelieu (not the cardinal of France, but a duke who was once governor of Odesa). At the northwest end of Prymorsky Bulvar is **Vorontsov Palace**. This baronial mansion is quite interesting and offers excellent views of the harbor from its perch above the waterfront. *Hours are unpredictable; $.* From the palace a pedestrian bridge leads along a pathway that ends at **Odesa's Art Museum,** *vulitsya Puskinska 9; open daily except Wednesday, 10:30 am to 6 pm; $.* Retrace your route back to Prymorsky and proceed just past the Potemkin Steps to a small square, in the middle of which sits the **Pushkin Statue**. Several of Odesa's best museums are in this vicinity. In fact, four museums are lined up in succession – the **Literature Museum** *(vulitsya Lanzheronvska 2; open daily except Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm; $)*; **Archaeological Museum** *(vulitsya Lanzheronvska 4; open daily except Monday, 10 am to 5 pm; $);* **Museum of Maritime History** *(vulitsya Lanzheronvska 6; hours vary; $);* and, a few blocks west, the **Regional History Museum** *(vulitsya Gavannaya 4; open daily except Monday, 10 am to 4:30 pm; $).* The Literature Museum contains many interesting

exhibits on notable writers such as Checkhov, Gogol, Pushkin and Tolstoy. The archaeological exhibits focus on finds from the Black Sea region, and the history museum concentrates on the story of Odesa.

There is less to see away from the city center, but one attraction is of note. Some people like to visit the overcrowded and generally inferior (compared to most Black Sea resorts) beaches on either side of the city center. Of greatest interest are the numerous **catacombs** that have been carved into the sandstone cliff that Odesa occupies. There are more than 600 miles of tunnels. The most popular is reached by bus route 87 to Nerubayske or by taxi. The catacombs here were used by partisans during World War II and the **Museum of Partisan Glory** is now housed inside. Because of the confusing maze of passageways it is best to secure the services of a guide to see the catacombs. Even if the guide doesn't speak English (most likely), you will find their directional assistance invaluable. *Open daily except Sunday, 9 am to 4 pm (until 2 pm on Saturday); $.*

Time permitting you should also spend some time at the **Cathedral of the Assumption,** vulitsya Preobrazhevskaya, open daily except Sunday from 8 am to 8 pm. Finally, **boat trips** on the Black Sea are popular with visitors. These aren't necessary if your cruise ship has sailing time on the Black Sea during daylight hours. However, some trips concentrate on touring the port, which are well suited to cruise visitors.

Shopping: For the most part Odesa's shopping doesn't offer anything out of the ordinary and you can find just about anything in any city of comparable size. If you do decide to shop here then do so at the **Pasaz**, a late 19th-century shopping mall with outstanding architecture. It might even be worth a look even if you don't plan to shop here. It's located on vulitsya Preobrazhevskaya.

Sports & Recreation: There are many beaches along the coast on either side of downtown Odesa. The best of several nearby beaches is **Arkadia**. Expect to be charged a modest fee for any of the nicer beaches. Taxis are the best way to get here if your ship isn't offering a beach excursion.

Palermo (Sicily), Italy

With almost 750,000 residents, Palermo is by far the largest city on Sicily and serves as the regional capital even though, in some ways, the population center of Sicily is on the east coast. Because Palermo is farther away from the quartet of possible Sicilian east coast destinations that we explored earlier, visitors to this port are more likely to spend the day in town or in the outlying areas of western Sicily.

Although the east coast of Sicily draws far more visitors (and cruise ships), Palermo has much to offer. In the past, Palermo could have been considered an ugly and depressing city despite its many attractions. However, the last few years have seen an ambitious program of urban renewal and the whole place is brightening up.

Arrival: The excellent harbor here has nine quays that can accommodate the largest of ships. There are good terminal facilities. The center of town is only about a quarter-mile away and walking there is no problem. Taxis are, of course, available. The train station is about a mile distant.

Tourism Information Office: Piazza Castelnuovo 35, ☎ (091) 605 8111. There is also an information booth at the port and in other popular tourist areas.

Getting Around: Palermo is a big city but the great majority of things to see are in a manageable area near the center. There is an extensive bus system, but Palermo has many poor areas where the crime rate is high. Therefore, do not travel to these attractions using public transportation. If it isn't part of a shore excursions, take a taxi.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: From the port, stroll south on Via Vittorio Emanuele to the center of the city. At the intersection with Via Maqueda is the **Four Corners** (Quatro Canti), the center of the old town and a good place to start your tour. The buildings surrounding this intersection all have interesting and colorful façades dating from the 17th century. In the adjacent Piazza Pretoria is the beautiful **Fontana Pretoria**, a lavish 16th-century fountain crafted by noted Florentine artists that is filled with playful (even cavorting) figures that originally shocked the conservative Sicilians when it was first placed there. The nearby Piazza Bellini showcases the ornate **Chiesa di Santa Maria dell'Ammoraglio**, known for its fine mosaics. *Open daily, 8 am to 1 pm and 3:30-5:30 pm (no afternoon hours on Sunday).* Here you'll also find the town hall. The surrounding areas have many churches, large and small. Several have Arabic architectural features, illustrating the importance of Arabs in Sicily's history. Often, this architectural style has been combined with Norman architecture. Sicily is probably the only place in the world where this interesting architectural combination is found. A little farther east from the Four Corners on Via Vittorio Emanuele will bring you to the vast Norman-style **cathedral**. Of special note are the crypt and the treasury. The latter has magnificent jewelry.

Corso Vittorio Emanuele; open daily, 7 am to noon and 4-6 pm; treasury, 9:30 am to 5 pm except Sunday; $ for treasury only. Beyond that on the other side of the Piazza della Vittoria and adjacent to the Porta Nuova (New Gate) is the fabulous **Palazzo dei Normanni**. This medieval-era palace now houses the Sicilian regional parliament and

contains three separate attractions of interest. The first part is the Palazzo Real and the second is the wonderful collection of 12th-century Byzantine mosaics in the Sala di Ruggero. Finally, and maybe most impressive of all, is the **Capella Palatina** (Royal Chapel), which brings new meaning to the word ornate with its collection of Arab art, fine mosaics and intricate wood carving. Piazza Indipendenza; the Palazzo Real and Sala di Ruggero can be seen only on guided tours on Monday, Friday and Saturday between 9 am and noon. *The chapel is open weekdays, 9 am until noon and 3-5 pm, Saturday, 9 am to noon, and Sunday, 9-10am and noon-1 pm.*

The next several attractions are scattered throughout the city center area. The **Museo Archeologica Regionale** occupies a former Renaissance-era monastery. The courtyard is lovely. Besides the compelling surroundings, the museum houses a fine collection of Greek and Roman artifacts*. Via Biara all'Olivella 24; open daily, 8:30 am to 6 pm (until 1:30 pm on Sunday); $$.* For an excellent art museum, try the **Galleria Regionale di Palazzo Abatellis**, *Via Alloro 4. Open 9 am to 2 pm, Monday through Friday (and again from 3 to 8 pm Tuesday through Thursday) and from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm on Saturday and Sunday.* Finally, the **Museo Internazionale della Marionette** will be a sheer delight for children who will probably be balking by now at all the grown-up attractions. Then again, adults will like this too. There is a collection of more than 1,000 puppets, marionettes and other related items. Many are from Sicily but the entire world is represented. Children will be even more delighted if you can somehow manage to be here at 5:30 pm on Fridays when a puppet show is presented. *Via Butera 1; open daily except Thursday, 9 am to 1 pm and 4 pm to 7 pm; $.*

There are things to be seen outside the city center area. The **Castello della Zisa** is Moorish extravagance at its best (*$*). Inside is a museum of Arab crafts. One of the most unusual attractions is the nearby **Catacombe dei Cappuaino**. Some people might find this rather gruesome, but there is no doubt that the more than 8,000 mummified bodies of people who died between the 17th and 19th centuries, all dressed up and standing in their Sunday best, makes an unusual sight to say the least (*$*). Another a good destination is the town of **Monreale**, with its spectacular cathedral and its cloister. Even if you've seen some of Europe's most famous and imposing cathedrals, you will be impressed with this one!

Shopping: Palermo has a number of busy and boisterous markets selling everything imaginable, including food. These are located all around the city, but you should limit yourself to those that are in the city center area.

Sports & Recreation: The best area beaches are in **Mondello** about eight miles from Palermo. You can get there by taxi. Shore excursions will most likely be offered to **Ustica**, an island about 36 miles from Palermo. This area is known for good scuba diving.

Palma de Mallorca (Balearic Islands), Spain

The largest and most popular of the Balearic Island group, Mallorca has more than five million visitors each year (the majority of whom fly in from all over Europe) and it is also one of the most frequent cruise ship destinations in the Mediterranean. Palma de Mallorca is the capital and largest city of the Spanish province that comprises the Balearics.

MORE ABOUT THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

These island playgrounds are between 80 and 140 miles off the coast of the Spanish mainland. Favorable climate and nice scenery make them popular resorts, and a lot of cruise passengers choose to partake in the resort-related recreational activities (swimming, watersports, etc.). Altogether there are 15 islands in the Balearic group, but only four are of significant size. In order, these are Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera. The latter is only rarely called upon by cruise ships. The islands of Menorca and Ibiza are visited by cruise ships and are profiled in this book. The islands are largely agricultural, with some light manufacturing. Tourism is an import economic mainstay for the combined population of about three-quarters of a million people.

Arrival: There is an excellent port with full terminal facilities located just a short walk from the center of town and the most important attractions. With the ability to handle up to six ships simultaneously, tenders should never be required.

Tourism Information Office: Plaza de la Reina 2, ☎ 971 712 216.

Getting Around: In the historic part of Palma de Mallorca (which shall be referred to simply as Palma from this point on), most attractions are within walking distance. Taxis are available for more distant locations, which includes most of the better beaches in the area. To explore the interior of the island, consider taking a shore excursion because car rentals are expensive and often unavailable. In addition, the island is mountainous, with many narrow, winding roads that feature less than adequate signs.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Begin your visit to the big island by touring Palma itself. The first four places of interest are practically lined up one after the other along the north side of the Parc de la Mar, which parallels the waterfront. This allows you to explore the points of interest while avoiding the confusing maze of streets only a few blocks away, not that those areas of town aren't without their own rewards. Begin at the west end of the park with the beautiful Palace of Almudaina, built in the 13th century as a Moorish castle and later used by Spanish monarchs. Even today it is sometimes closed to visitors if it's being used by the royal family. Entry is only via guided tours that are given on the half-hour. *Open daily except Sunday, 10 am-2 pm and 4-6 pm (no late afternoon tours on Saturday); $.* Your next stop is **La Seo Cathedral**, located across the Plaza Almundaina from the palace. It is easily the most recognizable structure on the island and you may have noticed it sitting majestically on a hill near the waterfront as your ship pulled into Palma. It is the second-largest Gothic cathedral in Spain and was constructed over a period of nearly 500 years beginning in 1230. Upon entry you will first visit the cathedral's small but interesting museum. *Place Almoina. Open daily except Sunday, 10 am to 12:30 pm and 4-6:30 pm; Saturday hours are 10 am until 1:30 pm); $.* Also in this vicinity is **La Llotja**, a beautiful Gothic structure which now serves as an exhibition center. Except when exhibits are closed to the general public, La Llotja can be entered and it is worth taking a few minutes to look around. The **Museum of Mallorca** (Museu de Mallorca) presents an interesting review of the city's history and culture. *Carrer Portella 5; open daily except Monday, 10 am until 2 pm and 4-7 pm (no late afternoon hours on Sunday); $.* The **Arab Baths** are just north of the park (walk up a gated street called the Portella and then turn right on Can Serra). The baths are in excellent condition and, despite their small size (only two small chambers remain), are one of the more interesting sights in town. Considering that the Moors ruled Mallorca for several centuries, it is worth noting that the Arab baths are among only a handfull of places where evidence of that era can still be seen. Portions of the columns supporting the baths date back to Roman times. *Serra 7. Open daily, 9 am to 6 pm; $.* Everything else in Palma is a bit farther away, but before you leave this area take a walk along the **ramparts of Ses Voltes**. There is a *mirador*, or lookout, that offers stunning views. Also, there is an historic **arch** over the Carrer Almudaina that once served as the gateway to the early Moorish settlement.

Palma also has a **Spanish Village** displaying architectural representations of building styles throughout the country. While it may not be as good as the one in Barcelona, it will be well worth the time you spend there if you can't get to the one in Barcelona. *Carrer Poble*

Espanyol; open daily, 9 am to 7 pm. West of downtown is a 14th-century fortified palace called the Bellver Castle. Situated in a large park, it's an attractive place to stroll and take pictures. *Camilo Jose Cela. Open daily except Sunday, 8 am to 9 pm; $.* The city portion of your touring day should take under five hours even if you do everything (but not allowing for shopping at the Spanish Village or elsewhere).

Outside of Palma the island of Mallorca offers a treasure trove of activities. The mountains known as the **Sierra Tramuntana** dominate the island, which is covered with extensive olive groves and pine forests. The coast is rugged and beautiful. The drive to **Sa Calobra** and the wild **Cape Formentor**, with its famous **lighthouse**, is one of the most scenic in all the Mediterranean. The winding road rises and falls precipitously, but shouldn't present that much of a problem as long as you take it nice and slow. Guided half-day island tours almost inevitably include Cape Formentor. If you do rent a car you can opt to explore more of the island and cut back on Palma. There is also a train that connects Palma with the town of Soller, but this limits your flexibility too much – a bus excursion would be better. Soller is just under 20 miles away. Other places of interest are the town of **Valldemossa**, 11 miles north, with its **Royal Carthusian Monastery**; and **Alcúdia**, 35 miles northeast, en route to Cape Formentor. The town boasts impressive Moorish walls and a museum with Roman artifacts as well as a Roman amphitheater.

Shopping: **Carrer Sindict** and **Carrer Sant Miguel** are two streets where you'll find many shops with goods for sale at reasonable prices. The enormous **Plaza Mayor** is the site of a major **crafts market** that is held daily except Sunday, 10 am to 2 pm. It's your best bet if you want the most popular local items, including leather, porcelain and carvings made from olive wood. The **Spanish Village** is also a good place to buy quality goods, but the prices there tend to be higher.

Sports & Recreation: Because Palma is *the* vacation island of Spain, it has a wide variety of activities from which to choose. These include, but are by no means limited to, ballooning, golf, hang-gliding, sailing, scuba diving, tennis, waterskiing and windsurfing. Although there are numerous operators in and around Palma, the best way to take part is through a shore excursion offered by your cruise line. It won't save any money, but it is more convenient and will generally allow you more time to partake rather than hunting down the right place. When it comes to beaches, there are plenty to choose from all around the island. All are nice, so it doesn't really pay to go far out of town. Of course, if you're traveling on your own to other parts of the island, a beach stop is a nice way to break up the day. Both the north

and east coasts have many fine beaches. If you want to stay close, a good choice is **Playa de Palma**, just southeast of Palma. There are also many beaches in the small towns along the coast west of Palma, including those at Portals Vells, Paguera, Sant Telm and Camp de Mar.

◆ NOTE: For details on **Piraeus**, Greece, see Athens, Greece, page 143. For details on **Pisa**, Italy, see Livorno, Italy, page 206.

Portimão/Praia da Rocha, Portugal

Situated on Portugal's famous Algarve coast, these attractive little seaside communities are only 1½ miles from one another. Each of these resorts can also be used as a base for exploring some of the more famous nearby (and not-so-nearby) southern coastal towns.

Arrival: In both places you will have to reach the shore via your ship's tender. However, as each town is rather small, all of the in-town sights are in close proximity.

Tourism Information Office: Portimão: Avenida Zeca Afonso, ☎ 282 470 717; Praia da Rocha: Avenida Tomás Cabreira, ☎ 082 419 132.

Getting Around: Both towns are small enough that you can explore them best on foot. Buses connect the two should you want to travel from one to the other on your own; taxis are also available. For exploring other places along the Algarve, consider a shore excursion because rental cars, although available, may be hard to come by with automatic transmissions. The cost is also fairly high.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: There is no way that you can fill up an entire day in either one port. In fact, the sights in both might well take most visitors less than a day, so consider some shore excursions or spending time on the beach. Portimão is still primarily a fishing port. As a resort it isn't as good as Praia da Rocha. The **Praça Manuel Teixeira Gomes** is a very pleasant main square and it adjoins a pretty **riverside promenade**, which is great for strolling. You should take time to explore the quaint **old fishing quarter** of town. There are also remains of a 14th-century church tower. One good use of your time is to take a **boat ride**. Two main options are available. One goes up the river and you'll likely see many types of birds (including flamingos), while the other explores the coast and some of its many **caves**. Trips last about 3½ hours, *$$$-$$$$.* Praia da Rocha is best known for its fine beaches and many visitors will be content to spend the day soaking up the sun and playing in the surf. However, the sur-

rounding area has its scenic delights as the wind-eroded rocks have been carved into marvelous formations. Many of these are on the beach, so those who prefer the sights to the surf shouldn't skip the beaches entirely. The town itself has little else to offer except for the 16th-century **Fortress of St. Catherine**.

Excursions from either town might take you to historic **Lagos** (only 10 miles away) or much farther to **Faro**. Both are popular Algarve destinations. Faro is the more interesting of the two, but whether or not your ship offers an excursion there depends upon the duration of the port call. Faro has many museums and churches in addition to the excellent old town section.

Shopping: Portimão is considered a good place to buy locally produced handicrafts at a reasonable price. Praia da Rocha actually has more stores with a better selection, but the nature of the goods is more mundane. And if you get the handicrafts (or anything else) in Praia da Rocha they're going to cost you more because this is the more chic resort area.

Sports & Recreation: The Algarve is known for its fine beaches. If you plan to use all or some of your port time here to go swimming or sunning, then you should head for **Praia da Rocha**, where the beaches are excellent. There are many more beaches heading west towards Lagos. The area is also home to several beautiful **golf courses**. You might inquire as to whether your cruise ship offers golfing excursions, since some of the clubs might be difficult to get into.

Portoferraio (Elba Island), Italy

The main town on little Elba Island (Isola d'Elba) has become increasingly popular as a port of call over the past several years. The island originally owes its fame to the fact that it was the first place to house Napoleon in exile. He lived a life of relative comfort during his short stay. The island, which measures 17 miles long and 12 miles across, is a mountainous place with only 30,000 residents. Now it has become a popular resort and may be said to be overrun with more than a million visitors each year, who come primarily to relax on the beaches.

Arrival: You will almost certainly have to tender to shore since the dock can accommodate ships no longer than 660 feet with a draft limit of 23 feet. There are no terminal facilities and the main town is about a third of a mile distant. Taxis are available.

Tourism Information Office: Calata Italia 43, ☎ (0565) 914 671.

Getting Around: The town of Portoferraio is small and you can easily explore all of it on foot. There are taxis and buses for getting to other parts of the island (including the other "major" towns of Marciana Marina and Marina di Campo), but a shore excursion will be more convenient and not necessarily more expensive than using taxis. You can also rent cars (manual transmission only), bikes and scooters.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Portoferraio is, in essence, the same medieval town that it has been for hundreds of years. It is still enclosed by walls that feature two old fortresses (not open to the public). Two sites are connected with Napoleon's time on Elba. The first is **Villa dei Mulini**, where Napoleon lived during his exile. *Piazzale Napoleone, open daily, 9 am to 7 pm except on Sunday when it closes at 1 pm; $.* About three miles from town is the larger **Villa Napoleonica di San Martino**. Although Napoleon did not live here, he sometimes came to visit the owner. Today it houses a collection of Napoleonic memorabilla. *Approximately three miles from town. Same operating hours as Villa dei Mulini; $. Combined admission ticket available at discount.* The rest of the island has many quaint villages and attractive resort facilities. **Poggio** is of most interest to visitors as this hillside town with steep streets paved with cobblestones has a special charm. It offers good views of the island and sea and even better vistas can be had by taking the **cable lift** to the top of **Moante Capanne**. It's unlikely that visitors will be able to fill up an entire day with sightseeing, so this port of call is a good choice if you want some time on the beach.

If Elba and Portoferraio whet your appetite but you can't find a cruise ship itinerary to your liking that includes it as a port, look for a port call at Livorno. From there, you can take a ferry (one-hour) or more expensive but faster catamarans (half-hour). There is frequent daily service.

Shopping: Portoferraio has a large number of retail establishments for a town of its size, but there is nothing unusual here and the prices are high.

Sports & Recreation: Just about everyone coming to Portoferraio other than by cruise ship does so for the resort atmosphere and the recreation. There are wonderful **beaches** all over the island; the best are on the south shore around the town of Marina di Campo. **Watersports** of all types are popular, especially scuba diving and windsurfing. You can sign up at operators in Portoferraio or you can opt to go with a pre-arranged shore excursion. The island is laced with **walking** and **bicycle** trails (both regular bikes and mountain bikes). You can get a map of the trails at the tourist office.

Portofino, Italy

Long isolated from other communities just a few miles away because of its location on a rugged peninsula (it is only in the recent past that roads were built to reach here), delightful Portofino is just one of many coastal communities that attracts the rich and famous, as well as the less well-heeled traveler. It would be fair to say that Portofino is the crown jewel of the Ligurian coast – also known as the Italian Riviera. It is also one of only a handful of such towns at which major cruise ships dock and it makes an ideal base from which to explore the surrounding area. Portofino prides itself on being one of the most photographed towns in Europe and, when you see it, you'll immediately know why. In addition to the magnificent setting, Portofino boasts a lovely atmosphere as a result of its colorfully painted houses. Less than a thousand people live here and there are always more visitors than residents, even when there aren't any cruise ships in town.

Arrival: The port is as tiny as the town so you'll have to tender ashore, but once arriving you'll find that everything is only a short walk away.

Tourism Information Office: Via Roma 35, ☎ (0185) 269-024.

Getting Around: Being such a small place, Portofino is ideally suited to simply strolling around and soaking up the surroundings. There are many attractions just a short distance from town. These are best seen by shore excursion because of Portofino's unique situation regarding cars. You can't rent a car here and, should you be coming here by car from other ports of call (such as Genoa), you must leave the car at the entrance to the town and pay a hefty price for parking. In addition, there are often long lines of traffic getting into town. Sign up for the most interesting shore excursion and enjoy.

Some notes on orientation are in order. Portofino lies along the southern Ligurian coast. From Genoa, it is about 20 miles to the towns of Rapallo and Santa Margherita, which sit at the beginning of the peninsula. Portofino is about five miles farther. Continuing south from Rapallo, it's about 50 miles to the fabulous Cinqueterre, which will be described later, then another 10 miles to the end of the Italian Riviera at La Spezia.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Take some time to walk around Portofino and see the markets and many villas where the glitterrati live. Be sure to stop in at **Chiesa di San Giorgio**, an attractive little church. The **Castello Brown** isn't one of the more impressive coastal fortifications you'll encounter, but it does provide a spectacular view. *Via alla Penisola; open daily, 10 am to 7 pm; $.* The former

abbey known as **Abbazia della Cervara** was built in the 14th century. For many years during the 20th century it was a private villa, but it has now been converted into the **Hotel Splendido**, one of the most luxurious places to stay in all of Italy. Visitors will be interested in the large and beautiful gardens as well as the cloisters and other areas of the former abbey that are still intact. Inquire at the tourist office concerning the hotel's current policy regarding public access and guided tours, as this does seem to change often.

The nearby town of **Santa Margherita** is as fascinating and beautiful as Portofino itself. However, another reason to go here is that it is the home of the **Parco Naturale Regionale di Portofino**, which offers lovely scenery and many activities (see the *Sports & Recreation* section). Nearby **Rapallo** is another good destination. Most visitors take the **cable car** (*$$ round-trip*) to its biggest attraction, the **Santuario Basilica di Montallegro**, which attracts hordes of religious pilgrims because the Virgin Mary was said to have been seen here in 1557. The cable car passes through pleasant scenery. Rapallo also has a 16th-century fortress.

Only slightly farther away are the five small towns collectively known as **Cinque Terre** – literally, the Five Lands – Corniglia, Manarola, Monterosso, Riomaggiore and Vernazza. This is a must-see if you come to Portofino. Although tourism is now much more important than fishing and wine production that historically have sustained the towns, you can still see the lovely terraced vineyards clinging to the mountainside as the cliffs drop precipitously to the beautiful Ligurian Sea. As the 21st century dawned, the Italian government created the **Parco Nazionale delle Cinque Terre** in order to protect the lands and its way of life from too much development. The area had already been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The charm that each of these towns has makes visiting as many of them as possible a worthwhile objective. While similar, there are differences in setting and each is beautiful. The areas between the towns are laced with trails.

The farthest of the Cinque Terre towns from Portofino is close to **La** Spezia, one final possible destination for your whirlwind day. It is about 45 miles from Portofino. While you may not have time to make it to La Spezia if you do everything I've mentioned up to now, the town does have several attractions of more than casual interest. Two excellent museums are located in the vicinity of Piazza Cavour in the western end of town. The **Art Museum** (Pinacoteca Civica Amedeo Lia) has a surprisingly large collection of European Masters, including Titian and Bellini. *Via Prione & Via del Vecchio Ospedale; open daily except Monday, 10 am to 6 pm.* Nearby is the **Civic Museum** (Museo Civico), a regional history museum with a good archaeological col-

lection dating back to the Bronze Age. *Via Curtatone 9; open daily except Monday, 8:30 am-1 pm and 2-7 pm; $*. The **Naval Museum** (Museo Tecnico Navale), near the port, has a fine collection of ship models. Of even more interest are the polenes, the figureheads that were placed on ships' prows in the old days. *Across the Canale Lagora from Piazza Domenico Chiode; open Monday through Saturday, 8:30 am to 6 pm, Sunday, 10:15 am to 3:45 pm; $.*

Shopping: With the exception of La Spezia, and most cruisers will probably not make it that far, all of these places are very small. Because they are heavily visited, there are a good number of stores selling many items. This is an exclusive area for the most part, and the prices reflect the status of the resorts. However, Liguria is known for the production of fine lace – if you want something to remember your visit by, that would be a good choice.

Sports & Recreation: While swimming and other beach and water activities are, of course, part of the recreational scene in Portofino and neighboring coastal areas, there is even more to do on the land. However, before moving on to that it should be noted that for **sailing**, **waterskiing** and **scuba diving**, the center of activity is Santa Margherita. **Hiking** and **biking** are extremely popular and you can get good maps in the tourist office. Among the best places are the aforementioned **Parco Naturale Regionale di Portofino** as well as in the **Cinque Terre** area. A nice walk, although a bit difficult if you have any kind of disability, is the track from just past Castello Brown in Portofino to the lighthouse at the tip of the promontory. There's also a great trail for nature lovers and birders along the coast around **Fossola Beach** in Riomaggiore.

Rhodes, Greece

The largest of the commonly visited Greek Aegean islands, Rhodes (Ródhos) is a beautiful island that sits just a few miles from the Turkish coast. It's about 45 miles long and 22 miles across at its widest point. The Ataviros Mountain here rises to 4,000 feet above sea level. Rhodes' history is one of conflict between the Greeks and the ancient Persians, as well as the Ottomans and the modern Turkish state. Its numerous historic attractions cover more than two millennia and include ancient sites as well as many from the era of the Crusaders. The port of Rhodes has been serving seafarers since the beginning of Western civilization. Rhodes was once home to one of the seven wonders of the ancient world – the Colossus of Rhodes – a giant statue that guarded the ancient city's port until it fell victim to an earthquake. Rhodes was ceded to Greece in 1947 from Turkey.

Arrival: The largest ships can generally dock at the piers located right outside the city walls and the only time you'll have to use a tender is in the unlikely event that there are too many ships in port to be accommodated at the dock. Simply walk through the wall's gate and you're in the heart of things!

Tourism Information Office: The municipal tourist office on Plateia Rimini (main square at north entrance to walled city), ☎ (2241) 035 945, is open only during the summer. If you visit when its closed, go to the Greek National Tourist Office branch a few blocks west at the intersection of Makariou and Papagou, ☎ (2241) 035 226.

Getting Around: Everything of interest in Rhodes City is quite close to the port, so there's absolutely no reason to take a guided tour of in-town attractions. Taxis and local buses are available if you tire of walking. However, Rhodes is a fairly large island with some interesting attractions out of town. Here, too, cruise line excursions can often be avoided by simply taking the cheap local bus system. Two nearby bus terminals are located just outside the walls in the heart of the New City, near the city market along Papagou Street at Rimini Square. Check at either station for schedules and routes that you might need. The most popular excursion, either by guided tour or on your own, is to Lindos on the southern coast (more about that later).

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Let's first take a look at the wonders of Rhodes City or Ródhos. Walking inside the walls of Rhodes is like taking a journey back in time. Even though you will encounter hundreds of merchants anxious to sell you just about anything, you can't help but feel the lure of history in almost every building and especially on small streets away from the center. From the dock you will enter the city through **St. Catherine's Gate**, one of several old gates still in use. The sturdy **walls** of Rhodes are quite a sight. Most of them are surrounded by a broad moat (it never had water in it) which today is a park-like area that's good for a stroll and is made rather pretty by the abundantly colorful and showy flowers that grow here. The streets in the Old Town are narrow and often confusing, but you can navigate by using the walls as a guide. An important means of getting around is via the street that runs just inside the wall from St. Catherine's Gate, past the Marine Gate and on to the New Gate at the north side of the walls. This leads into the harbor and New Town area. Left off **Sokratous**, a main thoroughfare and shopping avenue, is the historic **Avenue of the Knights**, which once housed the various facilities of several different orders of crusader knights. Today you'll see workers sitting at their computer keyboards, but the cobblestone street looks much as it did 500 years ago. A walk along it is a must. At the end of the street is Rhodes' single most important attraction, the **Palace of the Grand Masters**. The palace was the

seat of government under the crusader knights. Today it is sparsely furnished, yet still extremely impressive, with thick walls and vaulted ceilings. There are also excellent exhibits about Rhodes in a part of the palace*. Open daily except Monday, 8:30 am until 3 pm; $$.* You'll see the walls of Rhodes many times during your stay, but nothing can beat a tour of the walls themselves. Unfortunately, these are given only on Tuesday and Saturday at 2:45pm; *$$$*. Tours leave from the courtyard of the Palace of the Grand Masters. Visitors cannot go on the walls without a tour.

Other important and worthwhile sights in the old city are museums of archeology and decorative arts. The **Archaeological Museum**, Museum Square (Plateia Mouseou), is housed in the former Hospital of the Knights. The architecture of the building makes it worth seeing, and the collection of ceramics, coins and sculpture is an interesting and educational journey through Hellenistic Culture. *Open daily except Monday from 8:30 am until 5:45 pm; $*. The **Museum of Decorative Arts** *(Plateia Argykastron; open daily except Monday, 8:30 am until 3 pm; $)* features items found in Rhodian houses.

Before leaving the Old City you should take a brief look at the following places of interest at either end of Skratous Street. By the Marine Gate is the busy square known as **Plateia Hippocrates**, which has many wonderful examples of typical Rhodian-style architecture. In the middle of the plaza is the **Castellania Fountain**. At the other end of Skratous in the Muslim section of Rhodes called Hora is the **Mosque of Süleyman**. Across the street from the mosque is the interesting **Muslim Library**, with manuscripts and Korans. *Open daily except Sunday, 9:30 am to 4 pm.* Finally, at Plateia Symis (Symi Square), the **Municipal Art Gallery** has works by local artists*. Open Tuesday through Saturday, 8 am until 2 pm; $.*

Outside the walls beyond the New Gate in the New Town you can spend some pleasant time wandering around the central market and **Mandraki Harbor**. The north entrance to the harbor is flanked by two tall columns each topped by a deer. This has become the symbol of Rhodes. In the opposite direction, southwest of the old town is the **Acropolis of Rhodes**. This second-century area has several ruins and excellent views but it doesn't compare with Lindos.

And now for that popular excursion to Lindos, which I'll assume you'll be doing on your own. The bus ride from Rhodes City to **Lindos** is pleasant, although it's only near the end that the scenery becomes interesting. You get excellent views of the Aegean, as well as several resorts located near Lindos. The small town of Lindos isn't very important today, but it was a major settlement during the Greek colonization period of the seventh and sixth centuries BC. The **Acropolis of Lindos** sits impressively atop of a huge 375-foot-high rock out-

cropping. From the bus station, walk through a narrow, partly-covered lane lined with shops and street vendors. The path climbs steeply in some places (physically challenged visitors will have difficulty) and eventually becomes a staircase (292 steps) that ascends to the entrance. You can also get to the top by taking a donkey ride *($ each way)*, but most people actually find it easier and more comfortable to walk. The impressive fortress that you see on your way up was built in the 14th century, but some notable ancient ruins lie inside the fortress itself. Among the sights are a Byzantine church, a temple from the Roman period, several stoas (colonnaded public areas) and the magnificent architecture of the main temple propylaia (vestibules). In addition, you'll enjoy a magnificent view of the Aegean on one side of the fortress and the town below on the other. I highly recommend a visit to Lindos. Traveling independently, you'll need to allow a bare minimum of three hours (four is better), including the round-trip transportation. *Acropolis open daily except Monday, 8:30 am until 2:45 pm; $$.*

Because Rhodes is such a large island, there are some places to see outside of town. However, unless you've already explored the town itself and Lindos, it's not worth heading off around the island. What the rest of the island offers is mostly quaint little towns and several more ancient sites that, although interesting, don't compare with what has already been described. Note that if you really scour the cruise line brochures you might find an itinerary or two that call directly on Lindos. If so, you can just use the reverse routing to get to see the sights of Rhodes City. I'm not aware of any itinerary that would make two port calls on this island.

Shopping: Old Town Rhodes sometimes can seem like one big market as several commercial streets are lined with shops from end to end. Gold and silver seem to be in most demand, followed by leather and ceramics. Prices are generally reasonable. There is also a market in Lindos on your way up to the Acropolis. The selection isn't as big as in Rhodes City, but you might find that the prices are a little better.

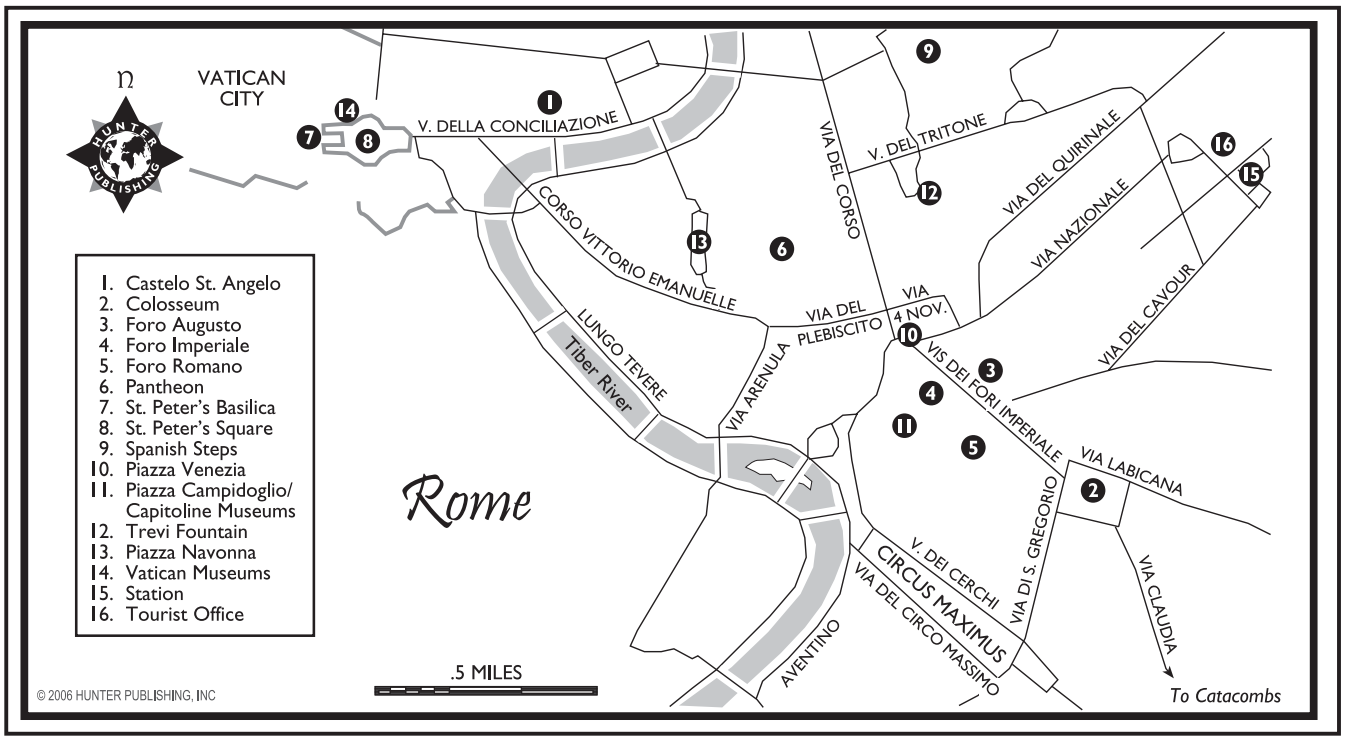
Sports & Recreation: There are a few **scuba** operators located in the Mandraki Harbor area. When it comes to **beaches**, Rhodes doesn't compare to many other Greek Islands. Yet, the main beach in town is quite nice. It begins to the north of Mandraki Harbor and curves its way along the shoreline past the northern tip of Rhodes City. You'll also find that there are more than a half-dozen beaches on the east coast between Rhodes and Lindos. One of the nicest is on **Vlyha Bay**, just before Lindos. Several more good beaches are beyond Lindos, but that's kind of far just to go to the beach.

Rome/Civitavecchia, Italy

The Eternal City is more than just a slogan. It almost has the status of a medal – rewarded to the city of Rome for its significance in the history of Western civilization, primarily for being the capital of the Roman Empire and, today, as the seat of the Papacy. Millions flock to see it each year. But that shouldn't come as a surprise given the myriad of wonderful sights and the atmosphere of excitement which it evokes in all who visit it. One of the more fascinating features is the constant dichotomy of past and present, of religious and secular. For here the monuments of ancient Rome are not in separate archaeological zones but in the very heart of the city, rubbing elbows with people's homes and businesses. In much the same way, Vatican City, although technically an independent state, is in reality another neighborhood of greater Rome – the keeper of the faith in an increasingly secular city. So come and enjoy what perhaps no other place in the world can offer.

Arrival: Rome's port is the city of Civitavecchia. It has a large cruise ship facility where you will be able to walk directly onto land. That's the good news. Now, a huge dose of reality. Unless your cruise embarks or debarks at Civitavecchia, you'll be able to see only a small portion of the remarkable sights in a day stopover. I always subtract several merit points from any cruise itinerary that makes Rome a day port of call. If you could walk off the ship into the very center of Rome and had the entire day to explore, you could still only scratch the surface. In reality, however, your sightseeing time in Rome is limited considerably by the rather inconvenient location of the port. Civitavecchia is about 45 miles from the center of Rome and, given traffic conditions, you have to allow almost three hours for the round-trip. Because of this, consider signing up for a guided excursion that will likely get you to the highlights quicker than you could on your own. If you do wish to go it on your own, the best method is by train. There are frequent rail connections from near the port to Termini station in the middle of Rome. Regular bus service also connects Civitavecchia with the Via Lepanto bus station near the Vatican. Both bus and train terminals are on subway lines, linking you with a good city transportation system. The cost of a taxi from the port to the city is almost prohibitive. Car rentals in Civitavecchia are a possibility, but the time you waste getting a car, finding a place to park in Rome, and then returning, makes public transportation a faster option.

Tourism Information Office: Rome: Stazione Termini, ☎ (06) 360 04 399 or at the Piazza San Pietro in Vatican City, ☎ (06) 698 84 466. Civitavecchia: Information is available at the port.



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Getting Around: Rome has countless attractions, and the overwhelming majority are concentrated in two relatively small areas. These are the ancient city and the Vatican. Other attractions in the city are still mostly within walking distance or can be reached easily by public transportation. Given Rome's horrible traffic, it is best to go by foot once in the city itself. Taxis can be used to get from one major area of attractions to another, but it will probably quicker and certainly less expensive to use the metro. Rome's small subway system consists of two lines (A and B) that run at approximately 10-minute intervals or less during peak hours. The lines intersect at Termini station. Sights outside of Rome can usually be visited by bus. Taxis will cost quite a bit, but are another option.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: This tour is designed to allow you to see some of the most important sights in about eight hours. That doesn't allow for a detailed exploration of them, but more of a cursory overview. You could eliminate those that are of less interest to you in order to concentrate on the big ones. As mentioned, most sights are clustered in two relatively small areas, ancient Rome and the Vatican. These two, even briefly done, will take up your entire day.

The majority of ancient Roman sites are clustered on and around **Palatine Hill** (Monte Palatino), one of the famous seven hills of Rome. A good starting point is the single most recognizable landmark, the **Colosseum** (Colosseo) on Piazza Colosseo (Metro Line B, Colosseo station). Completed in 80 AD and capable of housing 50,000 spectators, it is almost symbolic of the Roman Empire – at least, its excesses. Despite shaking from earthquakes and the subway and modern traffic, sacking by barbarians, and use of its marble by Renaissance builders, it is in remarkable shape. The grace of its many arches is evident from numerous angles throughout the surrounding area, but the true feel of history really hits as you walk inside and stand where spectators watched the games. The stadium "floor" is no longer there, so you can actually peer into the labyrinth of halls and rooms that were used as staging areas. Visitors can now explore both the lower and upper seating levels. *Open daily from 9 am until one hour before sunset; $$$.* On the adjacent Via di San Gregorio is the impressive **Arch of Constantine** and across from there is the entrance to the **Roman Forum** (Foro Romano) and the **Imperial Forums** (Fori Imperiale). These broad open spaces are filled with the remains of countless statues (many headless), columns and temples. Virtually all are mere shadows of their former glory but, surrounded by such pieces of history, it doesn't take much imagination to picture how it looked about 2,000 years ago. *Forums open daily except Monday, 9 am to 8 pm*. The **Palaces of Augustus, Fiavi and the House of Livia** are situated on Palatine Hill itself, which overlooks the

Roman Forum. All are interconnected and it is sometimes difficult to determine which one you're in without a good map. Finally, at the northern tip of this area at the far end of Via Dei Fori Imperiale (this street begins at the Colosseum at Via di San Gregorio) are three smaller forums: the **Forums of Caesar, Augustus and Trajan** (which contains Trajan's Column). Here also are well-preserved remains of what is considered to be a fine early example of an indoor shopping mall – the **Mercato di Traiano** (Trajan's Markets). Recent restorations now allow visitors to explore the interior of this six-level complex. *IV Novembre 94. Open daily, 9 am to 7 pm; $$.*

Piazza Venezia is created by the junction of Via Dei Fori Imperiale and Via Teatro di Marcello. In the middle is the huge monument to King Victor Emanuel II. Called the ***Vittoriano*** officially, but known to locals (especially its critics) as either the "typewriter" or the "wedding cake" because of its shape, it is nonetheless a splendid piece of neo-classical architecture. In front is **Italy's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**, guarded 24 hours a day. It was closed to the public for many years, but you are now free to go inside and take a look at what is the biggest structure in Rome after St. Peter's. The views of ancient Rome from the top are stupendous. *Open daily, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm.* Make your way from the forum area to nearby **Piazza del Campidoglio**, reached by steps leading up from Via Teatro di Marcello, just south of the Vittoriano. The plaza is the focal point for three Renaissance-era palaces built in neo-classical style. Two large stone lions stand at the bottom of the ramp leading up to the palaces, while statues of Castor and Pollux are at the top. All the palaces are now museums of art that focus on classical sculpture. Each one is worth browsing through. Collectively they are called the **Musei Capitolini**. *Open daily except Monday, 9 am to 8 pm; $$$.* From the far end of the piazza on Capitoline Hill there's another fine view of the ruins of the Roman and Imperial Forums below.

Before moving on to the Vatican area, there are four additional sights that even a day visitor to Rome should try to see: the Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain, the Pantheon and Piazza Navona. An easy starting point is Spagna station, Metro Line A. Turn left out of the station and go two blocks south until you reach the top of the famous **Spanish Steps**, so-called because the Spanish embassy was once located here. As you descend to **Piazza di Spagna**, you'll see why this beautiful setting is a favorite gathering place for Romans and visitors alike. Sometimes it is so crowded that it's a little difficult to see the steps! The area around the Spanish Steps is one of Rome's most fashionable shopping districts and those who have more than a day might want to browse the shops here. From Piazza di Spagna follow Via Condotti to Via del Corso and turn left. In eight blocks you'll come to Via della Murrate. Turn left and walk a few short blocks to

the **Trevi Fountain** (Fontana di Trevi), Salvi's 18th-century masterpiece of flowing waters and magnificent equestrian sculptures. Celebrated in movie and song (*Three Coins in the Fountain*), this is definitely one of the more beautiful places in Rome. Head back in the opposite direction of Via della Murrate and keep going in an almost straight line (the street will keep changing names). It's about half a mile to Piazza Navona, but a little more than half the way there you will come to Piazza della Rotonda and the **Pantheon**. Built as a Roman basilica in 27 BC, this wonderfully preserved and restored structure was converted to a church. It is justly famous as one of the foremost architectural examples of Roman dome construction. The many works of art inside are must-sees, particularly the tomb of the artist Raphael. *Open daily, 8 am to 7 pm (Sunday, 9 am to 5:30 pm).* Now you can continue your journey to **Piazza Navona**. This artistically excessive Baroque work contains many fountains (the best known is the Fountain of the Four Rivers) and statues by some of the greatest names in the history of Italian art, including Bernini. The three main fountains and their accompanying statues extend for more than 500 feet from north to south.

Anyone even remotely interested in history, architecture and the arts of painting and sculpture must go to Vatican City. A visit here will leave you overwhelmed not only by the beauty of the surroundings but by the historic and theological significance of this ecclesiastical enclave of Rome that covers 109 acres. Although I have put this area after the sights of ancient Rome, you may choose to do the Vatican first because large crowds come here and the later you arrive the longer the wait (assuming you're on your own). The nearest metro station is Ottaviano on Metro Line A, a little under a half-mile to the north. However, from a visual standpoint it is best to approach the Vatican on Via della Conciliazione, to the east. If you come this way you'll be greeted by **St. Peter's Square** and the magnificent colonnade that surrounds it. The square is familiar to all as the place where tens of thousands of faithful gather to hear the words of the Pope. Immediately behind the square is **St. Peter's Basilica**, easily the most recognizable religious structure in the world. No matter how many churches or cathedrals you've seen, nothing can quite prepare you for the overwhelming beauty found inside the basilica. Elaborate works of art grace the massive structure. Lines on the floor act as a sort of map, showing where the naves of other cathedrals end, allowing you to further appreciate the giant size of St. Peter's. Work on the basilica was started in 1506 and completed 120 years later. You can visit the dome that was designed by Michelangelo, as well as the Vatican Crypts that document 20 centuries of church history. The famous Pietà is in one of the many side alcoves, all of which should

be visited if you're to fully appreciate the remarkable museum aspects of the basilica. *Open daily, 7 am to 7 pm.*

The **Vatican Museums** (Musi e Gallerie Pontificie) are as superb as the basilica and take much more time to see. Although a large portion of the collection is religious art, the galleries are so vast that there is more non-religious art than is found in most fine museums. There are galleries of Egyptian, Etruscan, Greek and Roman works, among others, in addition to collections of tapestries and candelabra. Then there's the beautiful map gallery. Some galleries are largely devoted to the works of a particular artists, such as the Raphael Gallery. One of the visual highlights is certainly the two-horse Roman chariot known as the Biga. Of course, everyone wants to see the **Sistine Chapel**, and it's no wonder. This amazing room, best known for its ceiling paintings by Michelangelo, also features frescoes by at least a half-dozen other major Renaissance artists. As you wander from one gallery to the next, you will never forget that this was once a royal palace; highly ornate decoration and sumptuous architecture are in constant evidence. *Open daily, 8:45 am to 4:45 pm with the last admission at 3:30pm. Give yourself a bare minimum of two hours here; $$$.*

Additional Sights in Rome: It requires a minimum of three days to do full justice to just the major highlights of Rome. You could easily spend a week or more here and not get bored. Assuming you have time before or after your cruise (or you're on one of the relatively rare cruises that docks at Civitavecchia for more than a day), here is a quick run-through of additional sights you should concentrate on. Even a simple listing of Rome's many other museums and historic monuments could fill pages. Any tourist office can supply you with a brochure that summarizes the city's countless museums, which is simply beyond the scope of this book.

Ara Pacis Augustae & Mausoleo d'Augusto is the altar and surrounding marble wall that the emperor Augustus had built in 13 BC to commemorate a new era of peace. The emperor's mausoleum, just east of the monument, once served as a fortress but was reconverted to its original purpose by Mussolini in 1936. At press time a new facility was being built to house these historic treasures but no specific completion date was available. You can see the exteriors. *On the Via di Ripetta, just north of Ponte Cavour (Cavour Bridge) over the Tiber River.*

The huge **Basilica de Santa Maria Maggiore** combines Romanesque and Baroque features, mainly because it was built over a very long period of time. Mosaics from the fifth century depict Biblical scenes. Several popes are buried in the basilica's Sistine Chapel. Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore. *Open daily, 7 am to 6:30 pm*.

Dating from the fourth century, **Basilica de San Giovanni** is the oldest basilica in Rome (there are a total of four). Oddly, it – not St. Peter's – is the city's official cathedral. The current interior was done in the 17th century. Especially notable are the baptistry, several beautiful chapels and the cloister. *Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano. Open daily, 7 am to 7 pm; cloister closes at 6pm and baptistry has varying hours. $ for cloister only.*

The **Baths of Caracalla** are a living museum of life in ancient Rome. Via delle Terme de Caracalla 52. *Open daily, 9 am until one hour before sunset (till 2 pm on Monday), $$.*

The Golden House of the mad emperor Nero, **Domus Aurea** was one of the most extravagant palaces ever built, covering parts of several adjacent hills. The ruins that are left don't give a full picture of what it must have been like, but you can still get a feel of its vastness. *Via della Domus Aurea, at the base of the Esquiline Hill. Open daily except Monday, 9 am to 8 pm; $$.*

Galleria Borghese houses what was once the private collection of avid collector Cardinal Scipione Borghese. His mansion and the collection were acquired by the government more than a hundred years ago. Newly renovated, it is an outstanding display of art that spans centuries, including statues, mosaics and paintings. Piazza Scipione Borghese. *Open daily except Monday, 9 am to 7 pm; $$$. Reservations are required (www.ticketeria.it)*.

Hadrian's Tomb is along the broad avenue that leads to Vatican City and isn't far from the city itself. Officially designated as the National Museum of St. Angelo's Castle (Museo Nazionale di Castel St. Angelo), it's primarily an art museum and exhibition hall. While the collection isn't anything special (some of the changing exhibits are notable), it is worth a visit from an historic and architectural perspective to see the elaborate place that Hadrian had constructed for his remains. A ramp circles its way to the top of the round fortress-like structure (indeed, it was a castle for a period of time) and from there you'll get an excellent view of a good portion of Rome. *Lungotevere Castello 50; open daily except Monday, 9 am to 8 pm; $$.*

Italians don't wish to glorify the memory of Mussolini, but you can't deny that he constructed a city within a city called EUR that is located south of the city center via the metro. While EUR as a whole is just a group of large and mostly undistinguished buildings, the **Museum of the Civilization of Rome** is excellent. The collection includes several huge and wonderful Roman sculptures as well as a beautiful scale model of Rome as it appeared at the height of the empire. *Piazza G Agnelli; open daily except Monday, 9 am to 7 pm (to 1:30pm on Sunday); $.*

Don't confuse the above museum with the **Museo Nazionale Romano**. While the former is a most interesting facility, this is the premier collection of archaeological artifacts in all of Italy and one of the great museums of the world. It is a number of different museums and sites all falling under the same organizational structure. A listing of its units will give you a better idea of what it comprises. These are the Terme di Diocleziano (Baths of Diocletian), Piazza della Republica; the Palazza Massimo Alle Terme (Roman art), Largo di Villa Peretti 1; the underground ruins of the Crypta Balbi, and the baroque Cardinal's palace of Palazzo Altemps, Piazza Sant' Apollinare 46. Many of the individual main units are further broken down into more than one facility. *All parts of the museum are open daily except Monday, 9 am to 7:45 pm; $$$ each for most sections.*

Outside the City: A good half-day excursion (or a full day if you have time) is to the town of **Tivoli**, home to Hadrian's Villa and the Villa d'Este. The villa (**Villa Adriana**) was built as a retirement home by Emperor Hadrian. During his military days he had traveled extensively and it was here that he chose to re-create many of the buildings he had seen. The condition of various structures ranges from very poor to quite well preserved. It's a fascinating look at this period in history. Take a walk through the park-like grounds of his vast estate. *Open daily from 9 am until one hour before sunset; $$*. The nearby **Villa d'Este** was built as a Benedictine monastery over the site of an ancient Roman villa. It was converted into the home of Cardinal d'Este during the 16th century. Today, the home itself is of minor interest compared to the lavish grounds and wonderful fountains. In all, there are more than 500 fountains ranging from small to humongous, and from playful to extravagant. What is most striking is the overall effect, which combines natural landscaping with an incredible blend of architecture (in the form of statues and fountains) and landscaping. *Open daily, 8:30 am until 6:45 pm; $$.* Tivoli is 25 miles east of Rome via the Tivoli exit of the A-24 highway or Via Tiburtina. Buses for Tivoli depart from Via Gaeta near the central Termini train station.

Many visitors will want to see an example of the **catacombs**, the combination living quarters and burial grounds of the Christians during the days when they were persecuted. Many are located a short distance from central Rome. In fact, three are along a one-mile stretch of the Appia Antica, the modern-day version of the ancient Appian Way (so well did the Romans build their roads that some of the original road bed is still in use) less than two miles south of the Coliseum. These include the Tombo de Priscilla, the Catacombs of St. Sebastian and the Catacombs of St. Callistus. The last of the this trio is probably the best example and it is certainly the most heavily visited. *Via Appia Antica 110; open daily except Wednesday, 8:30 am-*

noon and 2:30-5:30 pm; $$. The Catacombs of St. Sebastian have the same hours and price.

Another worthwhile excursion can be made to **Ostia Antica**, the ancient port of Rome 20 miles southwest of today's city. Direct train service is available from the Termini station. While not the foremost example of Roman city ruins in Italy, the area is fairly extensive and includes commercial structures as well as apartment blocks and homes of the wealthy. I especially recommend it if you won't be getting down to Naples and, therefore, Pompeii. *Open daily except Monday, 9 am to 7 pm; $.*

Finally, especially if you'll be spending a night or more in Rome before your cruise, you might find yourself with some extra time in Civitavecchia waiting to get onboard. If so, the city does have a few points of mild interest. These include the old fortifications of **Forte Michelangelo**, an archaeological museum and the **old Roman port**.

AN ETRUSCAN ADVENTURE

I've made a point to stress my dislike of itineraries that have Rome as a day port of call. However, if you've already been to Rome, here's an idea for a great alternative day in the country. There are numerous ancient **Etruscan** archaeological sites centered in and around the town of **Tarquinia**, which is just a short ride from the port at Civitavecchia. In addition, your day can be made more varied by exploring the attractive nearby countryside, especially surrounding the town of **Viterbo** and the beautiful adjacent **Lake Bolseno**. Several cruise lines offer excursions that cover this area. Alternatively, you could rent a car in Civitavecchia and scoot around this region.

Shopping: Rome is one of the great shopping cities of the world but for those on a day port of call it would be a shame to spend time shopping when there is so much to see. However, visitors on a pre- or post-cruise stay might well want to allocate a day for buying things to take home and show the family and friends! There are several major shopping districts. The vicinity of **Piazza di Spagna** is Rome's most fashionable shopping area. However, one of the biggest and best – but not necessarily better known among visitors – is the area around the large **Piazza del Popolo** north of the city's historic heart (take Metro Line A to Flaminio Station). Rome is best known for designer fashions and all of the great names of the industry are found here, mostly in the Spanish Steps area and along Via dei Condotti. Jewelry and antiques are in demand by visitors. When it comes to markets, head to the huge Sunday morning **flea market**

held at Piazza di Porta Portese. Bargaining is a fact of life at the market.

Sports & Recreation: I can't recommend spending time on the beach or taking part in other sporting activities as a wise choice when in Rome. However, for those who must get some sun to make sure their tan stays perfect, the beach destination of choice is the **Lido di Ostia** which is just south of the ruins at Ostia Antica. You can get there directly by train.

St-Tropez, France

Although there is no denying that St-Tropez has a typically attractive Riviera setting (located on the north side of a peninsula called Cap de St-Tropez), it certainly isn't the most dramatic nor does it have the best beaches. It was French sex kitten Brigitte Bardot who first put St-Tropez on the map back in the mid-1950s. While the town hasn't grown much since then (it has fewer than 6,000 residents), it has become a famous resort and one of the most popular places on the French Riviera. It remains a hot spot for jet-setters and casual visitors alike.

St-Tropez is a place of contrasts. Some of the narrow winding streets haven't changed much in a hundred years, but the harbor is filled with luxury yachts.

Arrival: Upon tendering into the small port of St-Tropez, you'll be right in the heart of town.

Tourism Information Office: Quai Jean Jaurès; ☎ (04) 9497 4521.

Getting Around: The town is small enough that the best way to negotiate it is on foot. However, should you decide to go into the surrounding countryside, a shore excursion is the best choice because car rentals are limited and very expensive.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Other than taking some sun and strolling through the quaint streets, St-Tropez doesn't have a great deal to offer those interested in exploring the sights. Two decent museums are the **Naval Museum** (Musée Navale) and the **Museum of Modern Art** (Musée de l'Annonciade). The former chronicles the maritime history of the region and is of only mild interest, but its setting – in the dungeon of the old Citadelle – is unique! Moreover, the views from the hilltop and its park-like grounds are wonderful. *Rue de la Citadelle; open daily except Tuesday, 10 am-12:30 pm and 1:30-5 pm; $$.* The Museum of Modern Art was once a church. It has works by several well-known artists. *Quai de l'Epi; open daily except Tuesday, 10 am-noon and 3-7 pm; $$.* Spend some time wandering

around, especially in the old town area that is known as the **Quartier de la Panche**. There are even some small sections of the original town ramparts still standing. It makes for a relaxing way to pass some time.

Shopping: St-Tropez is filled with fancy boutiques with fancy prices. But, if it's shop-you-must, you'll find the greatest concentration of places around the harbor's quays. St-Tropez has an excellent market selling fresh foods and flowers. It's located in the main square, Place des Lices, and is open Tuesday and Saturday mornings. There's also a fish market.

Sports & Recreation: Many visitors crowd the beaches in St.-Tropez, but the best ones are actually located a few miles outside of town. You can reach them by taxi.

Salerno/Sorrento & The Amalfi Coast, Italy

These ports and related attractions are all on a small peninsula about 20 miles long and less than half that across. Because of the mountainous nature of the terrain, however, road distances from one end of the peninsula to another are more. Sorrento is on the northwest corner and faces the Gulf of Naples, while Salerno is on the southeastern end at the beginning of the peninsula. The famous Amalfi coast hugs the cliffs and shore of the southern side of the peninsula for a distance of only a little more than 30 miles between Salerno and Sorrento. Because of the proximity of these ports, no cruise ship will ever call on both. However, no matter where you stop on the peninsula or nearby areas, all of the sights are in easy reach.

Arrival: You'll probably have to tender ashore since the dock facilities can handle only smaller ships. Once you get off the tender, however, you'll be in the heart of either Salerno or Sorrento.

Tourism Information Offices: Salerno: Piazza Vittoria Veneto, ☎ (089) 231 432; Sorrento: Via Luigi de Maio 35, ☎ (081) 807 4033.

Getting Around: Each port can serve as a base for exploring the beautiful Amalfi Coast. You can get from one to the other by public bus. If you plan to visit both and take in more of the coastline, I recommend either a shore excursion or rental car (but be aware that the roads are winding and narrow). The variety of shore excursions is generally excellent but you will be able to cover much more on your own. Drive slowly and carefully and you shouldn't have any trouble negotiating the roads. Since Salerno is much larger than Sorrento, the availability of car rentals (especially automatics) is much better.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Although the best part of this region is the coastal route, we'll begin with a brief survey of the two ports themselves. Also remember that Sorrento is close enough to Capri that you may consider a visit to the isle if your ship docks here and doesn't call on Naples. The two are connected by ferry and hydrofoil service.

Salerno One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Unlike all of the other communities along and near the Amalfi Coast, Salerno isn't a small town. Further, it isn't charming or even attractive for the most part. But, besides being an excellent base for exploration there are a number of interesting sights. (For those who don't want to rent a car, the rail station is only about a mile away so you could even hop a train in order to make a day of it at Pompeii or Naples.) Begin with the elaborate **cathedral** (duomo) near the port. The most interesting part is the Chapel of the Crusaders. It is so-called because the weapons of the warriors were often blessed here before they were taken into battle; some warriors are even buried here. Adjacent to the cathedral is the small **Museo Diocesano**. *Via Duomo at Piazza Alfano. Open daily, 9 am to 6 pm.* Two blocks east of the cathedral is the **Provincial Archaeological Museum**, interesting because it contains artifacts from nearby ancient sites, including Paestum which will be dealt with shortly. *Via San Bendetto 28. Open daily except Sunday, 9 am to 8 pm.* The highlight of Salerno is **Arechi Castle** (Castello di Arechi), which stands high above the town. Getting there does require some effort and is not for the physically challenged. While the fortress itself is only mildly interesting, it does offer excellent views. *Reached by steps leading off Via Resorgimento; open daily, 7 am to noon and 4 pm to 7:30 pm.*

A short but wonderful little excursion from Salerno is the ancient site of **Paestrum**. It's not as large or spectacular as Pompeii, but it does have three well-preserved temples that are fine examples of the Doric style of architecture. There's also a good museum on the site. Although many visitors aren't aware of this until they get there, Paestrum was originally a Greek colony from the sixth century BC. It only came under Roman rule about 400 years later. Located approximately 20 miles south of Salerno via the coastal road or slightly longer (but faster) via the A3 highway (autostrada). *Open daily, 9 am until at least 5 pm; $$.* There is one other area that can be explored if you're traveling by rental car (since I'm not aware of any current shore excursions that come here, although that could change). This is the relatively unknown **Parco Nazionale del Celento e Valle di Diano**, which covers a huge area to the east and south of Paestum. There is lovely scenery, a wildlife refuge and a couple of caves that can be explored by guided tours.

Sorrento One-Day Sightseeing Tour: This is much more of a resort town than Salerno. It is also considerably more commercialized regarding tourism and is always busy with visitors. Despite those minor drawbacks, it is much more appealing than Salerno, and might even be characterized as having charm. Worthwhile sights here include the **cathedral** (of course), on Sorrento's main street, the Corso Italia; the lovely cloister in the **Chiesa di San Francisco**, Via V Veneto; and the **Palazzo Correale**. This palace, which dates from the 18th century, features an art and antiques museum. The interior of the palace also has some excellent murals. Part of the palace is now occupied by the **Museo Correale**, which has a fine collection of 17th- and 18th-century art. Outside is a pretty garden with steps that lead you down to the Gulf of Naples. *Via Correale; open daily except Tuesday, 9 am to 2 pm; $$.* Everything that there is to see in Sorrento can be reached by a brief walk either the east or west of the central square, Piazza Tasso, reached from the harbor area by Via Luigi de Maio, where you'll find Sorrento's tourist office. The square also contains the town hall and marks the beginning of the Corso Italia, most of which is turned into a pedestrian-only street during the middle of the day.

The Amalfi Coast: The road between Salerno and Sorrento often hugs the cliffs high above the Gulf of Salerno and occasionally drops down to the coast. If you've ever seen a movie where spies in sports cars race along a narrow road above the sea amid beautiful scenery (and who hasn't?), there's a good chance that this is where it was filmed! The area, known as the **Amalfi Coast**, is filled with natural beauty and picturesque towns that combine to make this one of the most attractive regions in the Mediterranean. Although you can see it from a bus window (either local routes or via a guided shore excursion), the absolute best way to see it is to rent a car. This way, you can stop whenever you wish to take in the view.

Aside from Sorrento and Salerno, the two biggest towns along the coast road are **Positano** and **Amalfi**. Both are simply delightful – the kind of places you see on postcards. Each town, but especially Amalfi, have their share of churches and small museums. Walking along the streets and soaking up the wonderful atmosphere is the primary activity. Positano is in an especially rugged location, so much so that there are few regular streets – most of them are steps! The coastal road winds through this picturesque scene. In Amalfi, besides the type of sights you'll find in Positano, there is the **Chostro del Paradiso**, a 13th-century edifice that was designed to hold the tombs of important local people. What is most interesting is that it is built in Arabic style. *Open daily, 9:30 am to 7 pm; $.* The best thing to do in Amalfi besides wandering around is to visit the beautiful **Grotta dello Smeraldo** and its emerald color floor. It's only a couple

of miles from town; I suggest that you take one of the excursion boats that leaves regularly from Amalfi. *$$.* One detour off the coastal road is especially worthwhile. Just east of Amalfi take the road from the shoreline that twists and climbs its way to the town of **Ravello**, which sits high above the Gulf of Salerno and offers unparalleled vistas of the coast and its small towns. Take some time to see the lovely **cathedral** and its carved lion pulpit and the crypt museum. **Villa Rudolfo** served as a temporary home for opera composer Richard Wagner, and the view from the terrace behind the house may be the best in town. The gardens are lovely. *Open daily, 9 am to 6 pm; $.* **Villa Cimbrone** also has tranquil gardens that are worth a look. *Same hours and price as Villa Rudolfo.* All of these attractions are either on or immediately off Piazza Vescovado. Finally, Ravello has many vineyards that can often be visited. Inquire at the tourist office in the town's main square, Piazza Vescovado.

Shopping: None of these places is great for shopping, although you will find plenty of stores selling souvenirs and other items in all price ranges. Even though Salerno is larger, Sorrento has better shopping. Most of the stores are on Corso Italia. Locally produced embroidery and lace are in most demand.

Sports & Recreation: The wonderful coastal scenery would lead you imagine that there is a lot of outdoor activity. There is, but maybe not as much as one would expect. The best opportunities for sports are in and around Positano. They have the best **beaches**, along with a host of other water-related activities, such as **boating** of all kinds and **scuba diving**. **Hiking** along the Amalfi Coast can be rewarding, but challenging. There are also many hiking trails in the aforementioned national park near Paestum. Besides Positano, the best beaches are also in the vicinity of Paestum.

Santorini, Greece

The beautiful Aegean island of Santorini, called **Thira** (less frequently spelled as Thera) by the Greeks, covers approximately 75 square miles and is home to about 12,000 people. The entire island is actually a portion of an ancient volcano's rim. The last eruption, around 1500 BC, is believed by scientists to be among the biggest in recorded history. There are some historians who believe that the legendary civilization of Atlantis was on Santorini prior to the eruption. Santorini is perhaps the most stunning of all the Greek islands and the sight of it is unforgettable as your ship comes into the caldera that now serves as the port area. The rocky cliffs that surround the crater rise to a thousand feet above the surface of the water. From a distance you will see a narrow band of white across the top of the

cliffs in several places. It almost looks like snow, but a closer look will reveal that it is really the white-washed houses so common on the Aegean islands!

Arrival: The main town on the island is Fira, located atop the cliffs and not down by the water. There is very little usable space at sea level and the port area consists of just a few buildings. Some very small ships (in the luxury yacht category) might be able to use the dock, but the overwhelming majority of vessels calling upon Santorini will weigh anchor in the waters of the caldera and you'll take a very short tender ride to the shore.

Tourism Information Office: There is no official tourist information office but you can make inquiry at the Tourist Police office in the main square in Upper Fira.

Getting Around: All the cruise lines offer a wide variety of excursions to different parts of the island, but I strongly recommend exploring independently. The town of Fira can easily be explored on foot, while inexpensive bus rides depart frequently for other parts of the island from a central terminal in the heart of Fira, near the main square of Plateia Theotokopoulou. (Once you reach the other towns on Santorini, most everything is also in a compact area.) The main street in town is 25th Maritou and it intersects with the square. However, we're getting a little bit ahead of ourselves. Since you'll be arriving at waterside, you have to first get up to Fira. In this case, getting there really is half the fun! There are three ways to reach the upper town. The easiest is to board the steep **cable car** that runs at frequent intervals throughout the day from 7 am to 10 pm and makes the climb or descent in a couple of minutes for a very low price (*$*). The view en route is gorgeous. You can also zig-zag up a winding trail by donkey for somewhat more but still a low price. The final option is to walk. However, you must use the same route as the donkeys and, remember, donkeys always have the right of way! While the climb looks forbidding, in reality the hike isn't overly difficult if you're in decent shape.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Having actually been doing a bit of sightseeing on your way up to the main town of Fira, you'll find that most of Santorini's other attractions are along the narrow and often maze-like streets of this charming town. There is a small **Archaeological Museum** (opposite the cable car station; open daily except Monday, 8:30 am to 3 pm; $). The **Museum of Pre-Historic Thira** covers some of the same ground. It has many items from the excavations at Akrotiri, including some beautiful wall paintings. *Mitropoleos, open daily except Monday, 8:30 am to 3 pm; $.* The **Megaron Museum** is also interesting. It has pictures of Fira before and after a major earthquake that occurred in 1956. *Agiou Ioannou,*

behind the Catholic monastery; open Monday through Saturday, 10:30 am-1 pm and 5-8 pm, Sunday, 10:30 am to 4 pm; $.

Fira is roughly in the center of the island. There are two primary excursions that you can take from town, each going in opposite directions toward the two ends of the island. To the south is **Ancient Akrotiri**, the site of an old civilization that some believe might have been the legendary Atlantis. Although excavations began in 1967, these things take a very long time and can still be considered to be in a relatively early stage so you won't see a great many large buildings. In fact, the whole place has the atmosphere of a work in progress. In some ways, that makes it even more fascinating. If you travel on your own to Akrotiri, the bus from Fira departs hourly and the ride takes about 40 minutes each way. Along the way you'll have wonderful views of the port area and caldera. In fact, you'll be able to see your cruise ship anchored in the vivid blue waters from many different angles as the bus winds it way up and around the southern portion of the island. *Akrotiri site open daily except Monday, 8 am to 3 pm; $.* Note that there is a combined admission ticket available (*$$$*) that includes Ancient Akrotiri, the Museum of Pre-Historic Thira and the Archaeological Museum. It will save you some money.

The second suggested excursion (which, like Akrotiri, will also always be available via a guided shore excursion) goes to the most northerly part of the island and the town of **Oia**. The trip takes about a half an hour each way as the route ravels along the crest of a high ridge. You'll have views of the Aegean to the left and right. Oia is a quaint little town perched at the very edge of the cliff. The view of the port areas and almost the entire island from here is the best of any on Santorini. You can pick out Fira if you have binoculars (or very sharp eyes). Activities in Oia are shopping and walking around the pretty dream-like town. Some of the streets are actually steep stairs descending below the top of the cliff. It is fairly easy to get lost for a short time, but the whole town isn't that big and you'll eventually work your way back to familiar ground. Buses run regularly but, as is the case with independent trips to Akrotiri, be sure that you allow enough time to get back to the ship.

Santorini also is home to several **wineries** that are open to the public on an irregular schedule. If you like this sort of activity, the best way to be sure that you'll get to see one is to sign up for a guided shore excursion. Most island tours (especially those going to Akrotiri) include a winery on their half-day itinerary. Less known to most visitors is the site of **Ancient Thira** on the east coast near the town of Kamari. The site dates from the ninth century BC; the ruins that can currently be seen represent the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods. There are great views from this site, which is more difficult

to reach if you're traveling independently. You might want to take a taxi. *Open daily, 8:30 am to 2:30 pm; $.*

Shopping: Many visitors to Santorini use this as a major shopping stop. Jewelry, fashions (especially sweaters), crafts and works of art are popular. You can also buy Greek wines, including some made right on the island. Just about every street in Fira is a shopping street. Most shopkeepers expect you to bargain over prices.

Sports & Recreation: There is some diving in Santorini but it's not a sport for which the town is known. Beaches, which have black sand owing to all of the volcanic activity, are best on the more isolated east coast, which makes them more difficult to access. **Kamari** and **Perissa Beaches** are two good choices here. In the north, **Armeni Beach** is a nice spot below Oia, while the south offers **Vlihada Beach**. Several more beaches are past the site of Akrotiri.

Sète, France

Sète has become increasingly popular as a cruise port of call. This isn't because of anything special in the town of some 40,000 people, but because of the wealth of possible shore excursions that can begin from here. Nonetheless, Sète itself is an extremely pretty town.

Arrival: As in many of Mediterranean France's small resort towns, you will probably have to travel by ship's tender to reach land because the dock here can accommodate ships of only 790 feet or less, a length that is exceeded by almost all of today's mega-liners. There are good terminal facilities. Once ashore, the center of town is quite close, although the exact distance depends on which of the three quays you arrive at. You can even walk to the nearby railroad station, which comes in handy if you want to head out of town on your own.

Tourism Information Office: 60 Grand rue Mario Roustan; ☎ (04) 6774 7171.

Getting Around: Everything in town can be reached on foot, although taxis are available. If you're going to be heading out of town then shore excursions are the easiest and most convenient method of travel. This is because rental cars are extremely limited. Trains are, in theory, a good option for reaching most places of interest, but you're likely to find that the schedules all-too-often will not fit well into your available time.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: From a sightseeing standpoint the only things to do in Sète are extremely limited. You can spend an hour or so wandering the quaint streets and taking in the nice view

from **Mont Ste. Clair**. Touring possibilities from Sète are much more numerous and, in my opinion, more worthwhile. These options include visits to Nimes and Avignon (about 50 and 70 miles away, respectively; see the description under Marseille). Closer (only 35 miles) is **Montpellier**, a large city with about a quarter-million residents. It is a most interesting and charming place. Especially noteworthy are the 17th-century old town and its gorgeous **Promenade du Peyrou** with its **Arc de Triomphe** (pre-dating the one in Paris). There are also lovely gardens, a cathedral, and several museums, including one with the works of famous artists and one devoted to regional archaeology. If you don't mind spending nearly four hours of your touring day on a bus, then an outstanding excursion option is to make the almost 90-mile one-way journey to the old city of **Carcassone**, where impressive crenelated walls protected the city from the siege of Edward the Black Prince of England in 1355. The walled portion of town dates back as far as the fifth century, although most of the current fortifications were built between the 11th and 13th centuries. There are many other points of historic interest in the walled city. It will be worth the ride to anyone who likes experiencing history. Unfortunately, Montpellier, Nimes and Avignon are to the northeast of Sète, while Carcassone is to the south, meaning that even if you had a dozen hours in port you could not combine them into a single day. Finally, although not offered as frequently as the others, you might find an excursion going to **Aiques-Mortes**. This town, less than 30 miles away, is a well-preserved small fortress town. In some ways it's almost like a miniature Carcassone.

Shopping: Shopping opportunities are limited in Sète. If you're on an excursion, which is likely, time will probably be allowed for shopping in Montpellier, where the pickings are better. Carcassone is, like Sète, not a major shopping destination.

Sports & Recreation: Staying in Sète to go to the beach is a possibility, but not necessarily a great idea. Although it has a nice setting on the sea, the beaches are only so-so and there aren't that many services since the town never really developed as a resort area. For truly great beaches you'll have to go as far as Narbonne to the south (about 50 miles) or to the north in the vicinity of Aiques Mortes (30 miles).

Sevastopol/Yalta, Ukraine

Although less than 45 miles separates Sevastopol and Yalta, they are completely different worlds. One is a big city; one is a resort and tourist area. In the last few years more ships have been calling on

Sevastopol but most passengers immediately head for the resort area of Yalta. This description will concentrate on the more famous of the two, but don't disregard Sevastopol completely.

Both are located on the **Crimean Peninsula**. The history of this part of the Crimea goes back to the ancient Greeks and it has had a succession of rulers. The Russians gained control in 1783. The tzars immediately recognized it as a good place for summer palaces and Yalta became a resort. Despite its long history, most of the important buildings date only from the 19th and 20th centuries because it was only then that this city of 90,000 blossomed as a resort. Despite its small size, Yalta is also of great historic significance. Known to millions of students because of Alfred Lord Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (commemorating the Battle of Balaklava in the Crimean War), Yalta took an even more important seat on the stage of world history as a host city to one of the three conferences of Allied leaders during and immediately after the Second World War. Upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Crimea reverted to its Ukrainian identity.

Arrival: In Sevastopol, ships of less than 760 feet in length and 28 feet in draft can tie up at the dock. There are no terminal facilities, however, although the center of town is within walking distance. Similarly, the port at Yalta is large enough to handle ships of up to 750 feet, which rules out walking directly onto the dock in the case of most of today's cruise ships. However, tender service will bring you within a short walk of the city center.

Tourism Information Office: There is no official tourist information office in either city, but in Yalta you can usually get some decent information from the travel agency office at Hotel Yalta.

Getting Around: The number of attractions in Sevastopol isn't high for a city its size, and they are spread out. If you're not taking a city tour, it's a good idea to make use of taxis, which are relatively inexpensive and reliable. Yalta is a much smaller place and many of the most important attractions are located in close proximity to one another in the vicinity of the port. For these places, exploring on foot and on your own is a good option. There are buses and trolleys to help you get around, but limited tourism facilities (at least in the Western sense) make it just as wise to book an excursion from your cruise line.

Sevastopol One Day-Sightseeing Tour: As indicated, most of the sights are in the Yalta area, but we'll first address Sevastopol for those arriving there and who do *not* intend to go to Yalta. **Suvorova** is one of the city's more important squares and is centrally located. The **Black Sea Fleet Museum** documents the long and sometimes not-so-glorious history of Russian (and now Ukrainian) naval history.

Vulits Lenina 11, open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm; $. **Nakhimova**, a large picturesque square, is near a seaside park with lovely views and some interesting sights, including the Eagle Column that memorializes lost ships. Nearby is the **Dolphinarium**. This isn't the best facility of its type, but it might be a worthwhile stop if you are traveling with children. *Open daily except Monday, 10 am to 4:30 pm; $$.* Also in the vicinity and easily recognizable by its splendid golden dome is the beautiful **St. Vladimir's Cathedral**, *open daily except Sunday, 9 am through 3 pm.* An unusual sight is the **Panorama**, a huge work of art that depicts the defense of Sevastopol during the Crimean War.

Yalta One-Day Sightseeing Tour: A walking tour of downtown Yalta begins with the waterfront's pedestrian-only promenade known as the Embankment, or the Promenade). From here, as it sweeps around Yalta Bay, you can appreciate the beautiful setting – a verdant narrow strip of land between the mountains and the Black Sea. Turn right off the promenade at Kirova and walk to the **Alexander Nevsky Cathedral**, a golden yellow structure with the traditional onion-shaped domes of a Russian orthodox church. The building itself, which dates from around 1900, is in the neo-Byzantine style. *Vulitsya Sadova, open daily except Sunday, 9 am until 4 pm.* Also in the downtown area, just off Kirova as you head back toward the waterfront, is the base station of a **chairlift** that takes you up to **Darsan Hill**. At the top is a lookout that somewhat resembles a Greek temple. It commands fine views of Yalta and the sea. A couple of miles inland are two more attractions. First is the **Chekhov House & Museum**, where the author came in the hope of alleviating his tuberculosis. Its collection of memorabilia will be of interest to those who like his literary works. *Vulitsay Kirova 112. Open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm; $.* **Polyana Skazok** is a weird place that, loosely translated, means something like "Fairy-tale Glade." It contains numerous life-size characters from Russian and Ukrainian fairy tales and sits amid a lovely natural setting. This is a great spot to take the kids. *Two miles past the Checkov House; open daily, 8 am to 8 pm; $.* Both attractions can be reached by bus from the city center.

The very best sights of Yalta are a short ride from town along the coast. Buses and taxis are available for those who don't wish to sign up for the guided shore excursions. Three miles to the east of town are the beautiful **Nikitsky Botanical Gardens**, which contain almost 30,000 different species from all over the world, including many tropical varieties that are supported by Crimea's warm climate and copious sunshine. The gardens cover a large area, so I suggest you take the bus to the upper gate and walk down to the lower gate to reboard the bus heading back towards Yalta. *Open daily, 8 am to 7 pm;*

$. Opposite the lower gate is the attractive **Prymorsky Park**, which heads down to the waterfront.

There are more attractions along a 10-mile stretch heading west from Yalta along the waterfront. Buses stop near each attraction so you don't always have to consider a taxi for longer distances. (Car rentals, although possible, should not be attempted.) The first stop is only a couple of miles from Yalta. **Livadia Palace** was built in 1911 for Nicholas II, the last of the Russian tsars. This is where the Yalta Conference was held. The structure, built mostly of white Crimean granite, is flanked by lovely gardens and overlooks of the sea. A mile-long walking path leads through the gardens. The Italian Renaissance-style palace has an Arabic courtyard. It now houses Yalta's historical museum and an art gallery. *Open daily except Wednesday and the last day of the month, 8 am to 7:30 pm; $$.* Back on the bus, you'll soon reach the famous **Swallow's Nest**. This picture-postcard-perfect structure (you'll recognize it because it is featured in various media) sits rather precariously atop a sheer cliff above the sea. It was built in 1912 for a German businessman and now serves as a restaurant. You can walk around on the outside balcony without eating here, but the restaurant is a good place should you decide to stop for lunch. Swallow's Nest is rather small, but certainly a unique and beautiful place. A couple of miles farther down the road is the **Ai-Petry Mount Cable Car**, which takes you to a spot offering superb views. Finally, less than two miles farther, is Alupka and the fantastic **Alupkinsky Palace**, built in 1828 for an eccentric English-educated count named Vorontsov (and thus the place is sometimes referred to as the Vorontsov Palace). Because of his fondness for Britain, one side of the house has Scottish architecture while the other is Arabic. The wonderfully manicured grounds are graced by marble lions and magnificent gardens fill terraces both above and below the house. *Open daily except Monday, 8am to 9pm; $.*

Shopping: Sevastopol won't appeal to western shoppers at all. As with any resort town there are plenty of places to shop in Yalta. Unfortunately, there isn't anything that is unique or even Ukrainian! What you will find are somewhat surprisingly upscale shopping areas along the vulitsya Pushkinskaya and the vulitsya Hoholya. These two streets parallel one another along either side of a canal that leads inland from near the southern end of the Embankment.

Sports & Recreation: Once again it is the smaller locale that has the best opportunities. The Yalta area is known for its fine beaches (at least by eastern European standards) that are mostly clean. They do tend to be crowded. You might want to take transportation provided by your cruise ship excursion office to some of the more outlying beaches.

◆ NOTE: For **Seville**, Spain, see Cádiz, Spain. For **Sorrento**, Italy, see Salerno, Italy. For **Syracuse** (Sicily), Italy, see Catania (Sicily), Italy. For **Taormina** (Sicily), Italy, see Messina (Sicily), Italy. For **Tunis**, Tunisia, see La Goulette, Tunisia.

Valencia, Spain

Although Valencia has around three-quarters of a million residents, which makes it the nation's third-largest city, for most visitors to Spain it gets lost in the shadow of nearby Barcelona. This is also true with the cruise lines, who don't seem to pay as much attention to Valencia as perhaps they should. The city has significant historic appeal. This includes the famous victory of El Cid, Spain's national hero, over the Moors in 1094. Legend has it that El Cid was killed early in the battle but his body was strapped to his horse and led the charge that defeated the Moors. Some say that the sight of a presumed dead man leading his forces is what led to the Moorish defeat.

Arrival: The big port can handle the largest of ships so you'll be able to walk off the ship at the dock. From the port and its two terminals with complete facilities, it is about 2½ miles to the center of the city. Take a taxi or bus to get into the downtown area if you plan to explore independently.

Tourism Information Office: Plaza del Ayuntamiento 1, ☎ 963 510 417.

Getting Around: Valencia is spread out over a large geographic area but, fortunately, the historic core is relatively small and is easily negotiated on foot. Some attractions are outside the center and you should figure on taking taxis. However, the bus system is extensive and you should consider using it if you have even a minimal ability to speak Spanish.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: The heart of the city is bordered on the northern edge by the former course of the Turia River. The course was changed to end the flooding that ravaged the area from time to time in years past. Although it still crossed by a large number of attractive old bridges, the river bed is now the pretty **Turia Gardens** (Jardines del Turia). Just across the Turia in the Jardines del Real (Royal Gardens) is the excellent **Museum of Fine Arts** (Museo de Bellas Artes), with a large collection that includes works by many well known Spanish and other European artists, among them El Greco, Goya and Velazquez. *San Pío V. Open daily except Monday, 10 am to 8 pm; $*. Less than a quarter-mile away through the maze of streets

that is the old center of Valencia is the **cathedral**, a stunning example of architecture but not one particular style. Each of its three portals is a different – Baroque, gothic and Romanesque. Inside the cathedral museum is, supposedly, the "real" Holy Grail, but other places also lay claim to this piece of Biblical history. *Plaza de la Reina. Open daily, 7:30 am-1 pm and 4:30-8:30 pm.* If you're in town on a Thursday, aim to be just north of the cathedral in the large Plaza de la Virgen at noon to witness a tradition that goes back more than a thousand years. The **Water Court** (Tribunal de las Aquas) takes place on the plaza adjacent to the cathedral. Farmers in the region meet to resolve issues over use of water in this dry area. Although the decisions are not legally binding, it is traditional to abide by the court's decision. A market is also held in this plaza. Adjacent to the market is the **Lonja de la Seda** (Silk Exchange). Housed in a fabulous 15th-century Gothic-style structure with a gargoyle-covered façade and columns inside that seem to be twisted. It's a most unusual building. *Open Tuesday through Friday, 9:30 am to 2 pm and 4:30 pm to 8 pm, on weekends, 9:30 am to 1:30 pm.* Continue south through the vast space of Plaza del Ayuntamiento, taking note of the town hall before arriving at your final downtown stop. This is the **Palace of the Marquis of Two Waters** (Palacio del Marqués de Dos Aguas), a former palace that now houses the **National Museum** of Ceramics (Museo Nacional de Ceramica). Ceramic arts from all over the world are on display here, but the museum concentrates on ceramics produced in the surrounding region, one that is well known for its quality work. Calle del Poeta Querol 2. *Open daily except Monday, 10 am to 2 pm and 4 to 8 pm (no Sunday afternoon hours); $, but free on Saturday afternoon and Sunday.*

About half-way between downtown and the waterfront is a large museum complex called the **City of Arts and Sciences** (Ciudad de las Artes y de las Ciencias). The first section is a high-tech science museum with imaginative exhibits, a planetarium, IMAX theater and laser-light show. All of the exhibits are first rate and this, despite a lack of signs in English, can be very educational for children. The second section is an oceanarium. Recently added to the complex is the ultra-modernistic performing arts center with a variety of programs. *Avenida Autovia del Saler 7. Open daily except Monday, 10 am to 8 pm (9pm on Saturday); $$ for each section, with a discounted ($$$) combined admission ticket.*

An interesting little excursion from Valencia is to travel just under 10 miles south to **Albufera Nature Park**, a freshwater lagoon with more than 250 species of birds. The refuge has many walking trails and you can take a boat ride along the canals that thread through the area. There's also an educational center.

Shopping: Valencia offers little that is unusual in the way of shopping unless you happen to be here on a Sunday when you can browse and shop to your heart's content in the huge **market** that takes place around the cathedral.

Sports & Recreation: Valencia offers several **golf** courses that are open to the public. **Sailing** is popular because the waters in this region are especially well-suited to that sport. There are also quite a few beautiful **beaches**. Valencia itself has a long beach with beautiful sand that is great for sun worshippers, although not so good for swimming as the water isn't always clean. If you want to go swimming, head to the beaches at **El Saler**, about eight miles from the city, near Albufera Nature Park.

Valletta, Malta

The tiny nation of Malta consists of five islands. The three inhabited islands are Malta (the largest), Gozo and tiny Comino, which covers less than two square miles. The capital, main city and port of call is **Valletta**, on the island of Malta. (You'll notice that many cruise line brochures refer to this port call as Malta, rather than Valletta. Either way, it's the same place!) This island covers some 95 square miles and has a fascinating history. It has been ruled by a succession of empires and nations and traces its civilization back to 3800 BC. Its most famous time began in the 16th century when the islands were presented to the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. Conflict with the Ottoman Empire was fierce. Malta eventually passed to British control in 1814. It received its independence in 1947 as a reward for the bravery and loyalty of its people after surviving devastating bombing during World War II. Tourism has played an important role in its current prosperity. Although there are sights outside the capital and on the island of Gozo, day-trippers can easily spend a day taking in the splendid sights of Valletta. English (along with Maltese, a Semetic language) is an official language, which is another reason for going it on your own rather than by shore excursion.

Arrival: The port of Valletta was designed with tourism in mind and includes a modern terminal and five quays capable of handling the largest cruise ships. It is also convenient to walk right into town, which is only a quarter-mile away. Buses and taxis are available.

Tourism Information Office: 1 City Arcade (just through the main gate to the old walled city), ☎ 21 237 747.

Getting Around: Valletta is a walker's paradise. Everything is close by and even people who don't like to walk much will normally not feel the need to hop in a taxi. You may wish to make use of local bus

route #98, which circles Valetta from the City Gate to the far end of the peninsula by Fort St. Elmo. However, traffic being what it is, it might well be quicker to walk. If you want to venture outside the city, a guided shore excursion is recommended. Car rentals are available but roads are often not well marked. Independent travelers will also find that a half-hour ferry ride connects Malta with Gozo; ferry schedules are coordinated with local bus services.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: Everything of greatest interest is contained in the magnificent **walled city** that dates from the Crusader era. The walls rival, and perhaps even exceed, those of Dubrovnik as one of the Mediterranean region's best, although Rhodes will argue the point, perhaps with some justification! They are extensive, well preserved and, just as importantly, have a myriad of sights within them. The walled city is about a mile long and a half-mile wide. The main entry point is the **City Gate**, which covers half of the peninsula between Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbor. It sits at the end of two streets (The Mall and Sarria Street), which provides a tree-lined parkway. The greatest of Valletta's walls face this side and consist of several bastions as well as the Great Ditch. The walls continue around the peninsula and can be accessed at several points. The first attraction is the **Auberge de Castile** in Castle Square, now a government office and closed to the public. However, its exterior is still worth a look. A couple of blocks east (through Castle Square and alongside the wall fronting the Great Ditch) are the pretty **Upper Barrakka Gardens**. In addition to flowers, you will be captivated by a fantastic view of the harbor. Back toward the center of town are the excellent **National Museum of Archaeology**, Republic Street (*open daily, 7:45 am to 2 pm; $)* and **St. John's Co-Cathedral** on St. John Street *(entrance on Triq il-Merkanti, $).* The latter isn't particularly impressive outside, but it does have a surprisingly lavish Baroque interior. Its museum displays, among other things, and a fine selection of priceless tapestries. Many of the Knights of Malta are buried here and their tombstones line the floor. A couple of blocks past the cathedral is the magnificent **Grand Master's Palace**, once the residence and offices of the Knights who ruled Malta. It still is the seat of government of Malta, now housing the Parliament. There's an extensive armory (which formerly served as the palace stables), as well as a depiction of the "Great Siege," when Malta was attacked by the Ottoman fleet in 1565. The state apartments and tapestry collection are also of great interest. *Republic Street; open weekdays, 9 am to 5 pm, however, these vary considerably. Also, the state apartments might be closed for official ceremonies; $$ plus additional $-$$ for armory and state apartments.* Continue towards the tip of the peninsula and you'll reach another series of walls and three more bastions surrounding Fort St. Elmo

and the adjacent **National War Museum**. The latter will be of great interest to military buffs. *Open daily, 7:45 am to 2 pm; $.* If you can, take a walk through the small but interesting **Medina**, Malta's original city that dates back nearly 30 centuries.

The above tour might well have exhausted your time in port but if you can, take in one of several multimedia theater presentations on the history of Malta. The best, called the ***Malta Experience***, is located along the wall in the Mediterranean Conference Center, south of St. Lazarus Bastion. *Films start on the hour; open daily, 11 am to 4 pm (1pm on weekends); $$.*

Other attractions include the **National Museum of Fine Arts**, Triq Nofs-in-Nhar (*open daily, 7:45 am to 2 pm; $)* and the **Lascaris War Rooms**. Fans of World War II history will find the latter intriguing and might want to substitute it for something in the suggested day-tour. Cut out of the rocks beneath the Lascaris Bastion along the Great Ditch (and somewhat difficult to find despite signs), is the location of the Allied forces' headquarters during the war. *Open weekdays from 9:30 am to 4 pm; $$.*

Shopping: Malta is a fairly well-to-do nation and so there are plenty of shops with nice merchandise from all over the world. Bargains aren't usually offered. For those who seek authentic Maltese handicrafts (especially glassware, lace and ceramics), try the **Malta Crafts Center** on Misran San Gwann Street. More typical shopping is concentrated in the many shops along Republic Street.

Sports & Recreation: **Watersports** are a popular diversion on Malta. These are best arranged through your ship's shore excursion office. The best **beaches**, which you should visit independently, are on the other main islands but if you're not going there for something else you will be better off spending your time at the beaches on Malta itself. Not many Americans are aware of the fact that **diving** and **snorkeling** in Malta is among the best in all of the Mediterranean region. This is due, at least in part, to the presence of many caves, reefs and shipwrecks that make the experience more unusual. Malta has more than 30 different dive sites, although the best diving and snorkeling is on the island of Gozo. However, there are more than a half-dozen dive sites in the waters around Malta, with two quite close to Valetta. Your cruise ship excursion office is almost sure to offer a dive excursion or two, but if not, the tourist office can put you in touch with one of the many reliable operators.

Venice, Italy

Few cities in the world have the magical appeal of Venice (*Venezia* in Italian). The city of water is famous for its canals, gondoliers and wonderful Renaissance architecture. For sheer romanticism it rivals Paris. Despite impressions that many Americans might have, Venice isn't a large city. In fact, the part of the city which occupies its almost 120 separate islands is home to only about 75,000 people (although more live on the mainland). Interspersing the islands are 150 canals that are crossed by more than 400 bridges. Only three bridges cross the Grand Canal, the city's largest waterway. Venice is one of the most popular destinations for Mediterranean cruises, both as a day port and as an embarkation and debarkation port. In addition, a good number of itineraries spend an overnight in Venice, giving you anywhere from 1½ to two full days for sightseeing and other activities. The only potential drawback to Venice as a cruise port is its location – it takes two full days sailing up and down the Adriatic Sea to get there. Thus, either the itinerary is longer (potential problem: cost and available time) or you'll have more days at sea vs. the number of port calls. Whether this is a problem depends upon your personal outlook. Do keep this in mind as you select a cruise that's right for you. There's no doubt that Venice is a splendid and worthwhile port of call, and the time you spend getting to it might be worth it if you include other stops along the beautiful Adriatic coast.

Arrival: The port of Venice is large, as one would expect for a city whose very existence is based on the sea. The docks vary in size but the largest can handle ships of up to 970 feet, which includes everything currently calling on this port. Port expansion was completed in 2002 and Venice can accommodate 14 ships at one time (although it would be rare for even half to be filled at once). Boat berths are in several locations, all near the city center. Most ships, including the largest ones, will dock at one of the piers close to Piazzale Roma, which means that a variety of public transportation options into the tourist heart of the city are available, including taxi and water taxis as well as the *vaporettos*, which are described below.

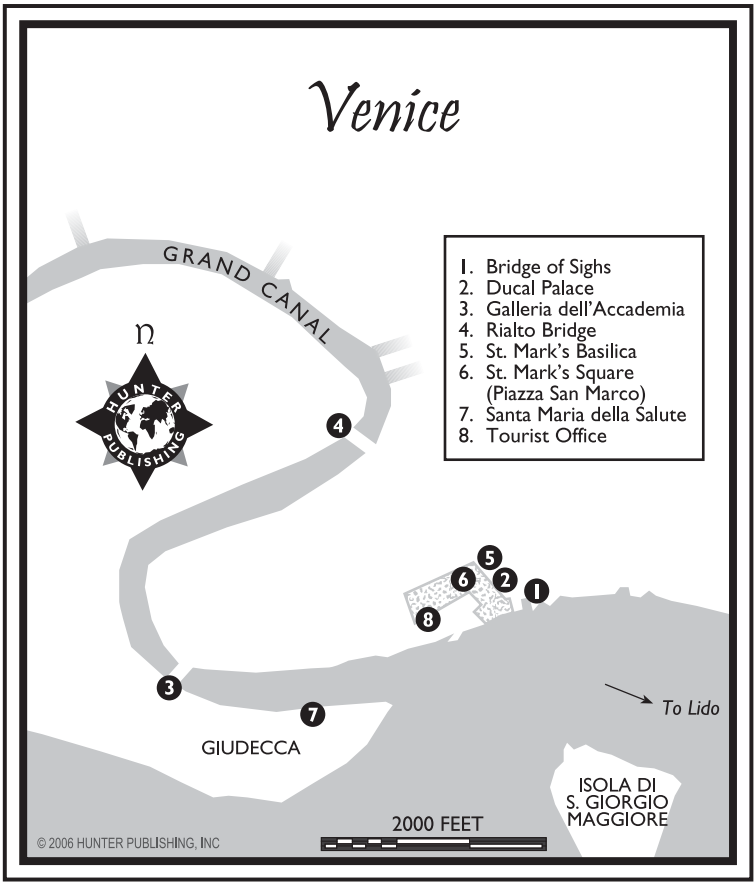
Tourism Information Office: Piazza San Marco 71, ☎ (041) 529 8711.

Getting Around: Public transportation is available in the form of water buses, water taxis and, of course, the famous gondolas. The boats known as *vaporettos* are Venice's main means of public transportation. These water buses ply the Grand Canal and other important areas on a number of different routes. Some more will be said about them in the discussion on seeing the sights. *Traghettos* are

smaller craft that ferry people across the Grand Canal in places where there are no bridges. There are eight such spots. Water taxis are essentially the equivalent of taxicabs in cities where the waterways aren't the main means of transportation. In the historic part of the city around St. Marks Square, it is best to get from one sight to the next on foot.

It's worth mentioning that the city has now introduced the **Venice Card**, which allows for admission into the major sights as well as use of public transportation. While it doesn't actually save any money, you will avoid having to stand in line each time you go into a point of interest or board a *vaporetto*. There are also 24-hour and multi-day passes for unlimited use on the *vaporettos*. If you are going to use them more than three times in a single 24-hour period, then the multi-day pass will save you money.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: The city's main thoroughfare is the incomparable **Grand Canal**, which winds like the letter S through Venice and is bordered by ornate palaces, beautiful churches and more. Colorful barber-shop-like poles grace the small docks where boats tie up along the canal. The best way to see the Grand Canal and, at the same time, get from one part of the city to another, is by *vaporetto*. There are many different lines; Vaporetto #1 is the primary Grand Canal route. Gondola rides are much more romantic than the crowded and somewhat noisy *vaporettos*, but you will pay dearly for the privilege of being serenaded by a gondolier in traditional garb. (About $60 for 50 minutes for one to six persons.) Of course, gondolas and water taxis can take you to out-of-the-way places along narrow canals that the big *vaporettos* can't. Gondola depots are as ubiquitous in Venice as taxi stands are in most American cities. During your ride along the Grand Canal on the way to St. Marks Square, you should make several stops. The first is at the **Ca'd'Oro** (Golden House), so named because of the gilding that was placed on the outside sculptures. The house today has a fine collection of art, including some of the frescoes that originally adorned the outside. *Open daily, 8:15 am to 7:15 pm (until 2 pm on Monday); $.* Shortly after the Ca'd'Oro is one of the most important sights along the Grand Canal and one that you should definitely see. This is the **Rialto Bridge**, the most famous of the bridges that cross the canal. This architectural gem is one of the city's busiest market areas and it's always humming with activity. Another good place to stop is the **Galleria dell'Acadèmia**, which has a collection that includes many important pieces by Venetian artists created through the centuries. *Campo della Carità. Open daily, 8:15 am to 7:15 pm (until 2pm on Monday); $$.*



The heart of Venice is the beautiful and romantic **St. Mark's Square**, or Piazaa di San Marco. This spacious plaza – usually filled with pigeons – is one of the most dramatic in Europe. Three sides of it are bordered by the brilliant architecture of the arcaded Old and New Procurias (the old administrative apparatus of the Venetian Republic) and the Library. On the west side are St. Mark's Basilica and the Palazzo Ducale (Ducal Palace). Few religious structures can match the beauty of **St. Mark's Basilica**, a masterpiece of Byzantine architecture that was constructed in the 11th century. Its many domes, tile work and frescoes are a wonderful introduction to the period, but be sure to go inside the basilica museum which has stunning works of art too numerous to count. Active visitors may want to climb to the top of the **campanile** (bell tower), which was rebuilt at the beginning of the 20th century. Also, don't miss the **Pala d'Oro**, probably the most bejewelled altarpiece in Europe. You'll find it in the treasury

behind the main altar. Attached to the basilica is the **Galleria**. Notable for its fine views of the massive interior spaces of the basilica, it is also the place where the original bronze lions that graced the exterior are kept. They were removed because of deterioration over the ages, especially in recent times as a result of pollution. Copies now stand in their place outside. The **Loggia** affords visitors the opportunity to look out over the square. *Open daily, 9:45 am to 50 pm (on Sunday from 2-5 pm); campanile open 9 am to 7 pm; $ each for the treasury (tesoro), sanctuary, and Galleria. The campanile is $$.* Conveniently located next door is the fabulous **Palazzo Ducale**, which was the residence of the dukes (or *doges*) who ruled the once vast Venetian Republic. A busy and usually jammed self-guided tour route takes you through the main entrance and up the Giant's Staircase. Although you'll see many famous works of art in several elaborate rooms, lots of visitors are fascinated by the narrow and dark **Bridge of Sighs**, so called because it was where prisoners were led from the palace into the adjacent dungeons. *Open daily, 9 am to 7 pm; $$.*

Additional Sights: The suggested tour, including time spent on the Grand Canal in both directions, should take up nearly the entire day for most visitors. However, Venice has a wealth of other attractions that you will want to explore if you have more time. You might first want to return to St. Mark's Square to look at some of the other buildings in more detail. Here's a rundown of some other important attractions of interest.

- NOTE: Venice can be very confusing if you stray from the Grand Canal and St. Marks Square so you should get a detailed map from the tourist office. Even with a map you're likely to get lost a few times, but that's part of the fun of visiting Venice.

Burano Island is a small and colorful little village that is known for its lace industry. The **Museo del Merletto** tells you everything you want to know about making lace. *Open daily except Tuesday, 10 am to 5 pm; $$.*

Exploring the many smaller **canals** can be an interesting way to pass some time. Of course, you'll likely do this if you take a gondola ride in addition to or instead of the *vaporetto*, but you can do so more cheaply by using a water taxi. Also, there are many pathways along the canal with pedestrian bridges that you can wander around without ever having to get on another boat.

Certainly most European cities have numerous churches of historic interest and artistic beauty. Few can compare with Venice when it

comes to this because there are literally dozens of **churches** that are worthy of your attention. Here are five of the best:

- **Chiesa dei Sts. Giovanni & Paolo**. One of the biggest and grandest of all Venetian churches, this Gothic church was completed in the 15th century. It contains, among other things, tombs of some 25 Venetian dukes (*doges*). *Campo Giovanni & Paolo. Open daily, 7:30 am to 12:30 pm and 3:30 to 7:30 pm.*
- **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute**. A 17th-century structure, it is perhaps most notable for its beautiful location. Near Punta della Dogana at the entrance to the Grand Canal by Campo della Salute. *Open daily, 9 am-noon and 3-6 pm; $ for the sacistry.*
- **Chiesa Frari**. If you have time to visit only one church, make it this one. Filled with wonderful art treasures (among them the famous *Assumption* by Titian, whose tomb is also in the church). It's also notable for its size. *Campo dei Frari. Open daily, 9 am to 6 pm (from 1pm on Sunday); $.*
- **Chiesa del Redentore (Redeemer)**. Built in the late 16th century as thanks for the city being spared by a plague, the church figures prominently in the city's glorious history. Giudecca Island. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm *(from 1 pm on Sunday); $.*
- **Chiesa San Giorgio Maggiore.** Situated on the tip of a small island where three major canals meet (including the Grand Canal), this is one church that can be missed when you pass by. The 16th-century structure is quite plain on the outside but it is home to a large number of art treasures. Also of interest to visitors is the superb view from the top of the nearly 200-foot-high bell tower. And because this one has an elevator, you don't have to worry about climbing a ton of stairs!. San Giorgio Maggiore Island. *Open daily, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm and 2 to 6 pm; $ for elevator to bell tower.*

The **Galleria d'Arte Moderna** isn't the most modern of art – it goes from the 19th to the mid-20th century for the most part, concentrating on the artists of Venice. The Renaissance house in which the museum is located is also of interest. *On the Grand Canal. Open daily except Monday, 10 am to 6 pm; $$.*

Like any city, Venice has its own unique neighborhoods. One of the more interesting areas is the **Jewish Ghetto**, which dates back to the early 16th century. In fact, the word "ghetto" originated here. There

is a small museum about Jewish history in Venice along with a **Holocaust Memorial**. The Jewish Ghetto is located off the Grand Canal via Canale di Cannaregio. The museum and memorial are a short distance east at Campo Ghetto Nuovo.

To the east of the main group of islands which comprise Venice is the area known as the **Lido**. You can get there by a pleasant ride on Vaporettos #1, #6 and #14. The Lido is Venice's resort area and, even though its beach isn't particularly nice, it always seems to be extremely crowded.

Venice and glass-making are synonymous to many people and **Murano Island** is the heart of the glass industry in Venice. Here you can visit a factory where the famous Venetian glass is made. The facility also has the Museo Vetrario, with an outstanding collection of some of the finest examples of the glass maker's art, specifically the type that has been come to be called Murano glass. *Open daily except Wednesday, 10 am to 5 pm; $.*

The history of Venice and the grand Venetian Republic are all tied to the sea and nowhere in the city can you find a better place to learn about it than the **Museo Storico Navale**. There are ship models and ship memorabilia, along with exquisite costumes that the ladies will adore. Some exhibits deal with naval affairs, but the word *navale* in Italian is more akin to our maritime, so this isn't, for the most part, a military museum. *Riva San Biagio. Open daily except Sunday, 8:45 am to 1:30 pm (until 1 pm on Saturday); $.*

The **Peggy Guggenheim Collection** is on display in what was once the Venice home of Ms. Guggenheim for three decades. She amassed a fine art collection during that time, mostly from the 20th century. Calle San Cristoforo at Palazzo Venier dei Leoni. *Open daily except Tuesday, 10 am to 6 pm (till 10 pm on Saturday); $$.*

Shopping: Shopping in Venice can be as much of a delight as seeing the city. Fine glass, fine lace and the famous papièr-mâché *Carnevale* masks are all items that visitors seek. While both glass and lace are best purchased, respectively, on Murano and Burano, they are available in stores all around Venice. The masks and other items can be found in all of the major shopping areas. These are especially centered around the **Rialto Bridge** and the area just to the west of **St. Marks Square**. In addition to more typical Venetian items, clothing and jewelry are sought after. Don't expect prices to be low, but know that you will be getting quality goods as long as you purchase in reputable shops. Venice isn't known for its markets although you will see plenty of street vendors selling their wares in popular tourist areas. Avoid buying glass, lace and other expensive items from them. They're alright for cheap trinkets but you can't be sure of the quality.

Sports & Recreation: The **Lido** (see above) is the main beach of Venice, but it isn't very nice and the water is often polluted. Save your recreational time for some other ports.

Vigo, Spain

Vigo is in the Galicia region of Spain, tucked into the northwestern corner of the country that juts out above Portugal. Vigo isn't very far from the border and Portuguese language and culture is in evidence here. The city is on the Atlantic and isn't often included in Mediterranean cruises (unlike Lisbon, which is a popular port of embarkation). On the other hand, a number of ships visit Vigo, even as part of a trans-Atlantic cruise or, more commonly, a cruise coming from other parts of western Europe. Vigo is a large commercial port and goes way back in history. The fishing industry has always been important and is still much in evidence.

Arrival: The docks are located in the northwestern corner of the city and can handle all but the very largest ships that call on Vigo without need for tendering. The dock is within walking distance of the heart of the old town and most of Vigo's sights.

Tourism Information Office: Plaza de la Piedra, ☎ 986 810 216.

Getting Around: Everything of interest is concentrated in a small area that is close to the port, so you should do just fine on foot. If you are planning on heading out of town, sign up for a shore excursion as car rentals are limited, especially for automatic transmission vehicles, and are quite expensive.

The One-Day Sightseeing Tour: The **old town** and its narrow and often winding streets, especially along **Rua Pescaderia**, has a certain charm. You will still see evidence of the importance of fishing as many of the people who live here make their living through the sea. There are a number of old churches, but none is especially significant. South of the old section is the **Parque del Castro**, a broad expanse of greenery on a hill that has the remains of an old fort called **Castillo del Castro**. The ruins aren't particularly impressive but they are quite large and will give you a feel for what it must have been like centuries ago. Perhaps better than the ruins are the excellent views from the four viewpoints, which offer vistas of the town and the coast.

The main reason for coming to Vigo isn't even in the city. It will seem like almost everyone from the ship will be making the excursion to **Santiago de Compostela**, a university town about 55 miles north of Vigo. The atmosphere here is charming and there are several muse-

ums of note, but Santiago's claim to fame is the belief that the remains of St. James the Apostle were found here (even though he died in the Holy Land). Explanations of how he wound up back here (in an area where he was definitely known to have preached during his lifetime) vary depending upon your religious orientation. Anyhow, Santiago de Compostela has been a pilgrimage destination for a long time. The major sights connected with this are all close together in the city center and consist of the vast Baroque and Romanesque-styled **cathedral** on Praza do Obradoiro, and the adjacent **Palace of the Archbishop**. Also of interest is the **Hostel of the Catholic Monarchs**, which served as a hospital for more than 500 years before becoming a *parador* about 60 years ago. (*Paradores* are government-owned historic properties which have been converted into hotels.) The major buildings connected with the pilgrimage sites are not only large, but architecturally and artistically fabulous.

If you decide to visit Santiago de Compostela on your own, you should allow about five hours, including round-trip transportation. Combined with the sights in Vigo, it makes for a nice full day.

Shopping: There is little of note when it comes to shopping, although you will find some quaint local shops in the old town. Santiago de Compostela is loaded with mostly touristy-type places good for inexpensive souvenirs and not much else.

Sports & Recreation: As with the case of shopping, Vigo isn't a destination to look for on a cruise itinerary if sports and recreation is of major importance to you.

◆ NOTE: For **Villefranche**, France, see Nice, France.
For **Yalta**, Ukraine, see Sevastopol, Ukraine.

Less Visited Ports

Don't make the mistake of thinking that because a port is less visited that it is automatically less worthy of seeing. The fact is that many small and unknown ports are treasure troves. A cruise that stops only at so-called "less visited" ports can be the experience of a lifetime. However, because only a relatively small percentage of all Mediterranean cruise ship passengers will get the opportunity to visit them, it simply isn't justified in detailing them to the same degree as the major ports. My purpose here is to introduce you to the possibilities. If several ports in this section are of great interest to you, then it will be worth your time and effort to seek out cruise lines with itineraries that go to these places. The ports in this section, in general, have more limited facilities for cruise ships. Thus, assume that tenders will

be required and that there are no terminal facilities unless otherwise indicated.

Agadir, Morocco

Agadir was founded by the Portuguese in the early 16th century. It sits on the Atlantic, west of the Pillars of Hercules. Much of Agadir has been rebuilt since 1960 after two devastating earthquakes, and nowadays almost as many ships seem to be visiting this port as other Moroccan ports. The exotic atmosphere, especially in the many interesting marketplaces, is a popular draw. Agadir and the surrounding areas have beautiful beaches and sports (both water based and land pursuits such as golf) are abundant. From a sightseeing perspective, Agadir's **Kasbah** is a mostly uninspiring series of fortifications with little to see on the inside. There is a **municipal museum** with a fairly decent collection that explores local history. Although it is possible to get to more interesting **Marrakech** on a day-trip, the distance is fairly great and it doesn't allow that much time to explore that city. A nearer excursion destination is **Taroudant**, in the lower elevations of the towering Atlas mountains.

Tourism Information Office: Place du Prince, off Avenue Sidi Mohammed, ☎ (048) 846377.

Aghios Nikolaos (Crete), Greece

This interesting little town sits near the eastern end of Crete. Although not frequently visited by cruise lines, there is strong evidence in the form of hotels that Aghios Nikolaos, formerly a sleepy fishing village, has been "discovered" by vacationing Europeans. It is now one of the biggest resort areas on Crete. Cruise ships will likely remain a limited commodity here because, like Heraklion, it is out of the way for most Aegean cruise routes. The town isn't old, especially by Greek standards, but it has a very pleasant setting on the Gulf of Mirabello. **Lake Voulismeni**, in the center of town, is sometimes called the Bottomless Lake, even though it is only about 200 feet deep. There is an **archaeological museum** and a more interesting **folk museum**. The small local **aquarium** isn't anything special, but the exhibits on diving will appeal to enthusiasts. There are several small beaches a mile or less from town. Tours to other sights on Crete (including Knossos, less than 40 miles away) are a good choice.

Tourism Information Office: Erythrou Stavrou 47, ☎ (2841) 026 900.

Alanya, Turkey

Once a sleepy town on Turkey's picturesque southern coast, Alanya has blossomed into a bustling resort in recent years. The city sits atop a scenic promontory overlooking the Mediterranean. Most points of interest are in the walled city, beginning with a series of impressive fortifications that were originally a massive **Seljuk fortress**. This includes the so-called **Red Tower** (Kizil Kule), which was built in 1226. Both historically significant sites also provide excellent views. Other sights in the walls include some of the gates and the **Süleymaniye Mosque**. Around the promontory are many caves, such as the **Phosphorescent, Lover's, Pirates** and **Damlatas Caves**. Some of these can be reached only by sea and an enjoyable way to spend some time is to take a **boat ride** to those that lie beneath the promontory. The new town, outside the walls, is largely a resort area. The only major point of interest is the **archaeological museum**. Alanya has several beaches; the undisputed best is **Cleopatra Beach** on the west side of the promontory.

Terminal facilities are present.

Tourism Information Office: Kalearkasi Caddesi, ☎ (0242) 513-1240.

Alghero (Sardinia), Italy

Alghero is a quaint old city and it's worth walking around the oldest section of town that dates back to Medieval times. There is a series of fortifications, but they aren't impressive. The main attraction in Alghero is the charming and decidedly non-tourity atmosphere. However, the highlight of this part of the island is the scenic **coastline**, with its stark cliffs, precipitous drops to the sea and isolated beaches. The single most popular attraction is **Neptune's Caves**, which can be reached either by boat or bus from Alghero (both offer several departures daily). The caves are certain to be a part of organized shore excursions as well. The northwest section of Sardinia around the town of **Olbia** is among the most picturesque in the Mediterranean. It isn't highly developed and that makes it even more attractive for many visitors.

Tourism Information Office: Piazza Porta Terra 9, ☎ (079) 979 054.

Almeria, Spain

The coastal scenery around Almeria is quite pleasant. Granada is about 100 miles away, and shore excursions to the Alhambra are possible for those who don't mind spending four hours of their shore time traveling. If you stay in Almeria the main point of interest is the impressive 10th-century Moorish fortified palace called the **Alcazaba** built by the Caliph of Cordoba. It rises on a hill just opposite the port area and provides splendid views. On the extensive grounds are many ruins, including the remains of a palace. The requisite Gothic-style **cathedral** is also worth seeing. It's located just a few blocks northwest of the port – look for the spire. Almeria also boasts a large covered market for those who want to shop. North of the city is a scenic area with canyons that looks a lot like the American southwest. In fact, many Westerns were filmed there and you can visit the sets of three films courtesy of the **Mini Hollywood** attraction. Nearby is the **Reserva Zoológica**. The beaches in Almeria – another of the famous resort towns of the Costa del Sol – are excellent and often less crowded than nearby areas. If you want to spend some time on the beach, this is one of the best places.

Ships can dock at the pier and there are terminal facilities.

Tourism Information Office: Rambla de Belén, ☎ 950 280 748.

Amorgos, Greece

The most easterly of the Cyclades Islands, beautiful Amorgos has steep mountains rising from the sea. It lacks any grand and famous monuments to the past, but offers many lesser ruins to explore both in and around the town. It has fine beaches, classic white-washed houses and is less crowded than most Greek island communities. In the main town is an **archaeological museum** and the **castle** (constructed by Venetian invaders) atop a rocky formation. No visit to Amorgos is complete without stopping at **Moni Hozoviotissis**. This Byzantine monastery is dramatically perched on the cliffs and looks like it could fall off at any minute – but don't worry, it's been there for a long time! Most of the beaches are small and clean. The countryside contains several picturesque classic Greek villages.

Tourism Information Office: None, but the Tourist Police office in Katapola's main square is a good place to seek advice.

Ancona, Italy

On a bluff that juts out into the Adriatic Sea, Ancona is a major commercial port that has a mostly industrial atmosphere. But, at the same time, it is an historic city that dates back to 390 BC. There are quite a few ancient ruins, along with medieval castles, churches and a smattering of museums. Among the best sites are the interesting **Piazza del Plebiscito** and its **Chiesa di San Domenico**. Also of interest is the **Art Gallery** (Galleria d'Arte). A pretty cathedral, **Cattedrale di San Ciriaco**, in Piazzale del Duomo, was built over an ancient Greek temple. Similarly, the 12th-century **Chiesa Santa Maria della Piazza** allows visitors to see parts of the foundations of a previous fifth-century church. All of these attractions are located in the heart of town. Two triumphal arches – to **Trajan** and **Clementine** – are examples of the Roman heritage. It is likely that your ship will offer excursions to Loreto (about 20 miles to the south) and its religious shrine of **Santuario della Santa Cruz**. It is said that this house of Virgin Mary was transported from Nazareth. Believers say angels moved it, but scholars tend to think that returning Crusaders were responsible. Another possible shore excursion travels to the better known pilgrimage town of **Assisi**, 75 miles from Ancona.

Ships not exceeding 825 feet can dock and there are terminal facilities.

Tourism Information Office: Via Thaon de Revel 4, ☎ (071) 358 991.

Bari, Italy

You'll never include Bari as one of the countless major "must-see" tourist destinations of Italy, but it does have a few things of interest. First is the old part of the city called **Bari Vecchia**. This is close to the port area and is suitable for individual exploration. Just to the west of Bari Vecchia is **Castello Svevo**, where successive rulers of this region built forts over a Roman site. Outside the castle is a nice public garden. However, the area's best sights are outside of town and will require either a taxi or guided excursion to reach. These are the famous ***trulli***, conical-shaped ancient houses that are believed to be from around 3000 BC. They are among the oldest relics of civilization in the Italian peninsula. Strangely, they can be found only in this area. Fairy-tale-like construction extends beyond the *trulli* and exploring the numerous examples can make for a mildly rewarding day.

Ships can dock at the pier in Bari and there are terminal facilities.

Tourism Information Office: Piazza Moro 32a, ☎ (080) 524 361.

◆ NOTE: For **Bastia** (Corsica), France, see Bonifacio (Corsica), France.

Beirut, Lebanon

The same problems that plague potential tourism throughout the Middle East apply to Lebanon. It is not a place that Americans frequent and if you want to take a cruise here it is likely you'll have to do so on a European line. Given the events of 2006, Beirut may not even be offered as a port call. If it is, here's what you need to know.

Although many of Beirut's center city sights are in close proximity to one another and lend themselves to a nice walking tour, visitors may feel more comfortable taking a guided tour rather than being on their own. The **Omari** (or Grand) **Mosque**; numerous **Roman ruins**, including the baths and a small remaining part of a once-grand colonnade; and the elaborate Ottoman-built **Grand Serall market** are all in the central business district. Among the better museums are the **National Museum**, the **Sursock Museum** and the **American University of Beirut Museum**. The National Museum is a wonderful facility that documents the long and turbulent history of Lebanon from prehistoric times. On the western side of the city are the **Pigeon Rocks**, a group of small offshore islands that are especially scenic before sunset.

Tourism Information Office: 550 rue Banque du Liban, ☎ 343 073.

Benghazi, Libya

Now that things are seeming to be so amicable with Libya's unpredictable leader, it is becoming okay for Americans to visit. However, I strongly suggest that you take the shore excursion route if your cruise comes to this city of more than 800,000 people. Should you venture out on your own, the most interesting part of Benghazi is the **Old City** near the harbor. Strolling around is quite an experience. Among the more interesting sights are the **Old Town Hall** and **Freedom Square**, the **Atiq** and **Osman Mosques**, and a couple of bustling markets. The first is the long and covered **Souq al-Jreed**, which ends at the vast **Al Funduq** market. Always be on the lookout for pick-pockets in any of the markets. This also applies even if you're on a guided tour.

Tourism Information Office: Sharia-al Corniche, ☎ 909 8765.

Bonifacio/Bastia/Porto-Vecchio (Corsica), France

Bonifacio is the most frequently visited member of this trio, but a stop here is still rare. The town can be reached from Ajaccio. It should first be noted that Bonifacio, at the southern tip of Corsica, and Porto-Vecchio, just up the eastern coast, are relatively close. Separated by a distance of about 25 miles, a port call at one can be used to explore the other. This is not the case with Bastia, located near the northern tip of the island, about 85 miles from Porto-Vecchio. There is no doubt that the single big attraction in Bonifacio is the striking **Citadelle**. Perched about 225 feet above the sea on a small promontory, it was selected as the location of a fortress because of its naturally defensible position. It is reached by stairs. Inside the walls is the so-called **Upper Town**, which contains a number of lovely churches including the **Église-Ste.-Marie Majeure** and the **Église St. Dominique**. Walking around in the Citadelle will lead you past elegant squares with numerous monuments. Perhaps best of all are the views of the sheer limestone cliffs that plunge to the sea. You can also get a good idea of the narrow isthmus on which Bonifacio is located. An underground passage leads to the **Gouvermail de la Corse** (Rudder of Corsica), a rock formation that bears a resemblance to a ship's rudder. The Lower Town, at the base of the cliffs, contains an aquarium and several nice beaches. Bastia and Porto-Vecchio are similar in some ways because both are situated on rocky promontories and have old towns enclosed by the fortifications of the upper towns. Of special interest in Bastia is **Place St.-Nichols**, a 19th-century plaza that is almost a thousand feet long. It contains an enormous statue of Napoleon decked out as a Roman emperor! The old town, or Terra Vecchia, is also home to the **Jardin Romero**, nice churches, and an ethnographic museum about Corsica. Porto-Vecchio has somewhat less to offer from a sightseeing perspective, but has an abundance of watersports, including diving. Boat trips that explore the scenic rocky coastline are a popular activity.

Tourism Information Office: Bonifacio: 2 rue Fred Scamarioni, ☎ (04) 95 731188; Bastia: Place St.-Nicolas, ☎ (04) 95 542040; Porto-Vecchio: rue Depute Camille de Rocca Serra,☎ (04) 95 700958.

Calvi (Corsica), France

Calvi is a nice place to dock (or possibly even visit from 65-mile distant Ajaccio) because of its location on Corsica's rugged northwest coast, one of the most scenic areas of the entire island. Like the trio of other Corsican towns mentioned above, Calvi also has upper and

lower towns with the upper portion being known as the **Citadel**. On a small peninsula jutting out from the rest of Calvi, the Citadel offers breathtaking views of the Ligurian Sea on one side and the Gulf of Calvi on the other. The fortifications were built by the Genoese in the 15th century. There are five bastions that can be visited. In the walled town are many stately buildings (most of which are not open to the public), but just walking around is a worthwhile experience. The **Tour du Sel** (Salt Tower) is an odd sight just outside the main citadel. Other diversions while in Calvi are **boat trips** along the coast or taking advantage of the fine beaches.

Tourism Information Office: In the marina area, ☎ (04) 95 651667.

Çanakkale (Troy), Turkey

This town has a great setting near the western end of the Dardanelles on the south shore. It's just a short distance from the ruins of ancient Troy and it seems that almost everyone who calls on this port will take an excursion there. Once believed to be a fable, the place turned out to be real enough, although its remains are rather meager at best. There is a re-creation of the legendary Trojan horse but it will probably be far better received by children than those interested in archaeology or history. Çanakkale itself does have a few points of interest, including an **archaeological museum** (with many artifacts from Troy), and **military** and **naval** museums. The Turks just love their military museums! A final point worth seeing is the **Cimenlik Kale**, a 15th-century Ottoman castle.

Tourism Information Office: Cumhuriyet Bulvar at the clock tower, ☎ (0286) 217 1187.

Cap Creus (Cabo de Creus), Spain

Cap Creus occupies a small peninsula on Spain's northeastern coast not far from the French border. It's a relaxing place in an area of beautifully rugged coastline with many coves. The **lighthouse** is a destination for walkers. An even better hike is the approximately two-mile trek to the town of **Cadaqués**; some ships might actually anchor there. That town dates from the 16th century and a walk around is mildly interesting. It also has a house-turned-museum that was once owned by famous artist Salvador Dalí.

Tourism Information Office: None in Cap Creus but there is one in Cadaqués at Carrer del Cotxe 2, ☎ 972 258 315.

Cassis/Sanary-Sur Mer, France

These two towns are lined up in close proximity to one another on the Cote d'Azur, between Marseille on the west and St. Tropez on the east. They are delightful little places where you can spend a short time strolling through the village and more time shopping or sunning yourself on the beach. Cassis is the better of the two because the precipitous cliffs above the sea are some of the most beautiful on the French Riviera. This is a good area for **wine tasting** or for taking a **boat ride** to explore the coast. **Diving** is better here than on most of the Riviera and is very popular. Sanary-Sur Mer is a quieter resort town. Excursions to some of the more heavily visited Riviera destinations will likely be available from both ports.

Tourism Information Office: Cassis – Quai des Moulina, ☎ (04) 42 017117.

Cephalonia, Greece

This Ionian island sits to the south of Corfu. The island is filled with groves of cypress and olive trees, which makes it typically Greek, as well as extremely pleasant to the eye. The terrain is characterized by scenic steep cliffs and the presence of **Mount Enos**. Cephalonia (also known as Kefalonia), has fine beaches and many resorts. Water-related activities are a big draw, but one shouldn't overlook some of its sightseeing opportunities. These include some small **ancient ruins** and **monasteries**. The biggest attractions, however, are natural. A series of **sea caves** can be seen via small boats. These caves are like grottos and many of their waterways disappear, only to mysteriously reappear at one of the island's biggest attractions – the lovely **Melissani Lake**. You can also see beautiful stalactite formations in **Drogarti Cave**. The small capital town of **Argostoli** is a pleasant place with a sheltered harbor.

Tourism Information Office: At the waterfront in Argostoli, ☎ (2671) 022 248.

Ceuta (North African enclave), Spain

Ceuta is a tiny enclave of Spanish territory (administratively part of Cádiz province) on a small peninsula jutting out of Morocco. It is one of several such enclaves that Spain still maintains on the North African coast. Today's city is on the site of an ancient Carthaginian settle-

ment. Ceuta comprises seven peaks and the highest of these is thought to be Abila which, along with what is now known as Gibraltar, were the ancient Pillars of Hercules. Today the mountain is called **Jebel Musa**. Ceuta, like Gibraltar, is in a strategic location and its history is tied up with military events. **Foso de San Felipe** is a fortified moat begun in Moorish times. This is the best part of what remains of the city walls. Inside the small confines of the town center are the **Arabian Baths** in the 13th-century Plaza de la Paz; the 10th-century **Dragon's House**; and the Baroque-style **Santa Maria de la Asuncion Cathedral**. The **Legion Museum** (Museo de la Legíon) documents the history of the Spanish Legion (similar to the French Foreign Legion). On the north side of town along the **Marina Española** is the attractive **Maritime Park of the Mediterranean**, a tranquil place (except when the locals crowd here on weekends) that's nice to look at and good for a rest stop to break up your sightseeing activities. It has an artificial beach, pools, lakes and waterfalls, all interconnected by bridges and nicely landscaped grounds filled with sculptures. From the eastern tip of the peninsula you'll have an excellent view of Gibraltar and see a rock formation known as the **Monte Hacho**. Some historians feel that this (and not Abila) was the other Pillar of Hercules. By Monte Hacho is **Fortaleza de Hacho**, first constructed in Byzantine times. Everyone who ruled has added to it over time. Also at this end of the peninsula is **Castillo del Desnarigado**. Within the confines of the fort is the **Museo del Desnarigedo**, a small military museum.

Tourism Information Office: Avenida Muelle Cañonero Dato, ☎ 956 501 401.

Constanta, Romania

It's likely that few Americans other than those who have previously sailed to the Black Sea have ever heard of Constanta, but it is Romania's second-largest city, with a population of more than 350,000. It dates back to the sixth century. Near the waterfront are Constanta's **casino** and a Genoese-built **lighthouse** from 1860. Also here is the **Naval History Museum** which, despite the name, covers a wide range of Romanian history; the **Saligny Monument**; and, a few blocks inland, the **Mahmudiye Mosque**. The minaret is sometimes open to the public. Its 140 steps require that you be in good shape but the sweeping views from the top are worth the effort. In the center of town is **Victoria Park** (Parcul Victoriel), which has some remains of the **city wall** built by the Romans in the third century and an impressive **Victory Monument**. There is a **Museum of Art**, but far better is the **Folk Art Museum**, housed in a beautiful building. The

exhibits here will give you a much better insight into Romanian life. Near the museums is a 19th-century mosque called the **Geamia Hunchiar**. It was constructed with stones that once were used in a fortress built by the Ottomans. The best museum in Constanta is the large **History & Archaeological Museum**, which traces the history of Constanta from ancient times and has a remarkable collection of artifacts. The most famous item to be found among the museum's extensive displays is the **Glykon Statue**. This fearsome representation of a serpent has the muzzle of an antelope and the eyes and ears of a human. The attractive square on which the museum sits contains some notable antiquities. Don't miss the **Roman mosaic** that dates from the third century. Other possible attractions (a little bit farther from the city center) are **Tabacariel Park**, on the southern edge of a lake of the same name, which is connected to another lake called **Siutghiol**; and the **Planetarium** and the **Dolphinarium** (both of which are great for kids, as is the nearby **Children's Park**). Constanta and the areas to the north and south of it have beaches, which range from so-so to very nice. Generally, the farther you get from the center of the city, the better the beach.

Tourism Information Office: Blvd. Tomis 46, ☎ 611-429.

Dikili, Turkey

Located on the Aegean coast about mid-way between the western end of the Dardanelles and Kusadasi, Dikili is an attractive resort with the emphasis on watersports and sunbathing. It was just a small fishing village not very long ago. Even as a resort there isn't that much of note. However, what prompts the cruise lines to come here is the possibility of a shore excursion to the famous ruins of **Pergamum** (Pergamom). The former capital of the kingdom of the same name, the city became important in the third century BC. It later allied itself with Rome and became part of the empire in 133 BC. As such, it was one of the chief cities of Asia Minor. Most of the ruins that can be seen today date from the Roman era and include a theater, amphitheater and circus. These are among the most splendid ruins in the Mediterranean region, rivaling even Ephesus. Other possible excursions include some lesser ruins and typical Turkish towns and markets. Go for Pergamum!

Tourism Information Office: There is no tourist office in Dikili but you don't need one. Should you travel to Pergamum on your own, you'll find information on visiting the site at the entrance.

Ermoupolis, Greece

On the relatively large (85-square-mile) island of **Syros**, this town is one of the more populous and industrialized in the Cyclades group. As a result, it isn't particularly attractive and there isn't a great deal to see. However, the town square of **Plateaia Miaouli** boasts a neoclassical style town hall and a small **archaeological museum**. The best thing to do is to wander around the medieval quarter of Ano Syros. Here you'll find the lovely **Agios Cathedral**, a museum on the life of a locally famous folk singer, and great views of the sea. Sailing is a popular diversion on Syros. The rest of the island doesn't have much to see either, but you can find many decent beaches, especially on the east coast of the island opposite from Ermoupolis.

Tourism Information Office: There is a waterfront information booth, ☎ (2281) 080 356.

Fethiye, Turkey

This Turquoise Coast town is situated in the extreme southwestern part of the country. It isn't well known yet, but it probably will be – the wonderful waters here are so clear that you can see the remains of ancient cities beneath the surface. **Caunos** is an excellent nearby example of the "underwater" cities. The bay on which Fethiye is situated is filled with islands. For those who like their ruins on the land, there are plenty to be seen, starting with the **crusader fortress** that sits on a hill overlooking the town. Several fascinating sites nearby date back to the empire of Lyci (before 450 BC), including hundreds of tombs built into the face of cliffs. **Ancient Telmessos** is the foremost example near Fethiye. Don't miss the rock face **Tomb of Amyntas** here. Also in easy reach (and a few of the small ships actually have a port call there) is the **Dalyan River**, where turtles nest on the deserted beaches. This is such a marvelous area. There's an archaeological museum in town. Depending upon how much time you have, you can explore the many nooks and crannies of the coast on a locally hired sail boat. The **12 Island Boat Tour** is the most popular but, unfortunately, you probably won't be given enough time to take the ride. Negotiate with a local boat owner for the best deal.

Tourism Information Office: Iskele Meydani, opposite the marina, ☎ (0252) 614-1527.

Gabes, Tunisia

Tracing its origins to the ancient Phoenecians, Gabes doesn't have nearly as much to see (especially in the city) as Tunis. Many visitors will join an excursion to visit some of the nearby ancient ruins. These aren't as good as the ruins found around Tunis either, so a more worthwhile trip might be an excursion into the desert, where the scenery can be quite compelling. In this regard, look for an excursion that goes to **Matmata**, about 27 miles southwest of Gabes. The moon-like landscape is so unearthly that it was here the "home" planet of main character Luke Skywalker, of *Star Wars*, was filmed. There are relics left from the filming, but of equal interest are visits to some of the **Troglodytes** – underground homes dating back centuries. If your cruise ship doesn't offer an excursion to Matmata, there are many operators in Gabes that will take you there. Gabes is also a good base from which to participate in various recreational pursuits, especially water-based activities.

Tourism Information Office: Ave. Farhat Hached at Ave. Habib Bourguiba, ☎ (75) 270 254.

Gaeta/Ponza, Italy

Gaeta is a small coastal town, while Ponza is a small island along the coast between Rome and Naples. There isn't too much to see in either place and I certainly don't consider as a plus any itinerary with either of these as ports of call. Gaeta and surrounding towns do have a number of decent beaches. Ponza has some charms, but there is little specific to see. The mostly rural atmosphere is mildly attractive. Regular boat service to Ponza is available if you are on the mainland. *Tourism Information Office:* There is an office in Ponza along Via Molo Musco, ☎ (077) 180 031.

Gallipoli, Italy

This town shouldn't be confused with a place of the same name in Turkey, where a famous battle was fought in World War I. Military matters have played an important role in Italy's Gallipoli as well, because of its strategic location along the Gulf of Taranto in the heel of Italy's boot. The ages have seen Gallipoli victimized by many invaders. Contemporary Gallipoli is divided into old and new towns. The fortified old town is on a small island that is reached by a 17th-century bridge. Primarily a fishing town, one of Gallipoli's more

interesting sights is the bustle of the morning **fish market**. More typical points of interest include **Castello Aragonese** (the fortress), the Baroque-style **Duomo** and the unusual and highly ornamented interior of **Chiesa La Purissima**. The old **Fontana Antica** is an elaborate fountain that tells a sad story. Gallipoli and the surrounding areas have numerous beaches which usually aren't too crowded.

Tourism Information Office: Piazza Imbriani 8, ☎ (083) 326 2529.

Güllük, Turkey

South of Kusadasi, this is another of Turkey's beautiful Turquoise Coast resorts. As with Dikili, it has only been recently developed as a resort. Therefore, it isn't yet overdone. The city is located on a body of water known as the Bay of Roses. History buffs can venture to nearby **Didyma** (or Didima), where the remains of an ancient Greek settlement will provide enough awe for the day. The **Temple of Apollo** is especially impressive. This region of Turkey is filled with marvelous ancient ruins. In addition to Didyma, excursions that might be offered to the ancient cities of **Bargylia, Milas** and **Iasus**. While none, including Didyma, rival Pergamum, they'll be just fine if you haven't been to the latter while visiting Dikili. If you've had your fill of ancient ruins, Güllük is a great place to just relax on the beach and walk around.

Tourism Information Office: There is no tourist office but information will be available at the pier.

Gythion, Greece

On the Peloponnese Peninsula, about 25 miles south of Sparta (there is little to see at Sparta), Gythion is on a small offshore island called Marathonissi. It is connected to the mainland by a causeway. The town has an interesting **church** and good **beaches**. The island is, according to Greek mythology as retold in the *Iliad*, the place where Helen and Paris had an affair before fleeing the Spartans and touching off the Trojan War. The town served as the port for ancient Sparta. **Tzanetaki Tower** dates from around 1700 and contains a local **history museum**. There is also an **ethnographic museum**. The best beaches are located just south of town. Gythion is also known as Gythio.

Tourism Information Office: Vasileos Georgiou 20, ☎ (2733) 024 484.

Hydra, Greece

Also known as **Idhra**, this is one of the smaller Cycladic islands. The quaint isle on the Saronic Gulf is something of an artist's colony – not surprising considering its idyllic rocky setting. It's a car-free island. You can hike or take a donkey ride to the mountaintop **monasteries**, where the frescoes are as outstanding as the views. Back in town you can spend some time at **Lazaros Koundouriotis Historical Museum**, named for a key figure in the Greek war of independence. The exhibits trace his role in the war. There is also an **historical archives museum** and a **Byzantine museum**. Hydra doesn't have any really good beaches, but the **diving** is among the best in the Aegean islands and there are several operators if your cruise doesn't offer a diving excursion.

Tourism Information Office: There is no tourist office but the Tourist Police can provide information.

Hyères/La Lavandrou, France

The town of Hyères is the gateway to the three small offshore Hyères Islands group (Porquerolles, Port Cros and Levant). Of some interest is **Ile du Levant**, half of which is reserved for naturalists. In fact, those who wear clothes on the beach are considered outsiders and aren't particularly welcome. **Port Cros National Park**, a marine life reserve with lots of butterflies and hiking opportunities, occupies the entire island of the same name. Only a couple of cruise ships call on the Hyères Islands, but if you're eager to visit them, boats run from the mainland at Toulon as well as from Hyères town itself and from Le Lavandrou. The latter port isn't particularly interesting, but is an equally good jumping off point for the islands.

Tourism Information Offices: Hyères: 3 Ave. Ambroise Thomas, ☎ (04) 94 018450; La Lavandrou: Quai Gabriel Péri, ☎ (04) 94 604050.

Ibiza (Balearic Islands), Spain

The Phoenecians first settled Ibiza thousands of years ago. Tourists rediscovered it in the 20th century. Although it receives only a quarter of the visitor volume of Mallorca, Ibiza can still be quite crowded. The natural scenery is just as pleasant here as on the other Balearic Islands, although most people come for the wilder nightlife and the

great shopping. The **old town** (D'Alt Vila) has a well-preserved section of walls and has been declared a United Nations World Heritage Site. Built in the 16th century over Roman ruins, the fortified area is reached by a steep ramp from the lower town. Within this portion of the town of Ibiza (also known as Eivissa) are the fine **Archaeological Museum** (Museu Arqueologic), a **cathedral** and the **Museum of Contemporary Art**. The port town (or Sa Penya) has lots of shops and is frequented by many people of alternative lifestyles. You can take a boat ride from the town's harbor to **Formentera**, the smallest of the four main Balearic Islands. Those who like the sun and surf can choose from 11 miles of really great beaches. Tours into the interior can also be rewarding as the scenery is quite nice.

Ships tie up at the dock.

Tourism Information Office: Passeig des Moll, by the ferry terminal, ☎ 971 301 900.

Ischia, Italy

Ischia is a small island off the coast of Naples. It is not as popular as Capri, but is almost as pretty as well as somewhat less crowded. It is known for its fine beaches, thermal springs and mud baths. There's a road that circles the island and the whole trip covers only 22 miles around. Public transportation or taxis are the way to get around since rental cars aren't available. The main port is **Ischia Porto**, a resort with lots of shopping and several beaches. A small castle (**Castello d'Ischia**) is on an offshore island that is linked to town by a bridge. Ischia boasts a rugged coastline. The island is of volcanic origin and that has contributed to the large number of **thermal baths**. One of the most interesting is the **Poseidon Gardens**, where bathers sit on stone chairs much as in the days of Ancient Rome. The more adventurous can take the half-day hike to and from the top of 2,585-foot **Monte Epomeo**, the island's highest point. If your cruise ship calls on Naples and you've already been seen that city as well as Capri, Ischia can be an excellent alternative to doing repeats. It can be easily reached by a 45-minute hydrofoil ride from the port in Naples.

Tourism Information Office: Via Iasolino, ☎ (081) 507 4231.

Itea, Greece

This small town on the Gulf of Corinth is hemmed in by mountains to the rear. As a town it has no particular interest for visitors. It's claim

to luring at least some cruise ships is that it is the closest port to the fabulous ancient site of **Delphi**, which is only 11 miles away. You'll be able to devote most of the day to a visit there. Note that although you can reach Delphi from Athens, it is far more convenient to access from Itea. However, few ships call here. For details on Delphi, refer back to the excursions from Athens, page 143. Also of interest in the vicinity of Itea is the attractive **Parnassos National Park**, named for the mountain peak of the same name.

Tourism Information Office: There is no tourist office in Itea but there is one in Delphi at Vasileon Pavlou and Friderikis, ☎ (2265) 082 900.

Kalamata, Greece

On the southern coast of the Peloponnese, Kalamata's (Kalamai) history is associated more with medieval Greece than with the ancient city states. There is a 13th-century **fortress** (kastro) above the town. Although the ruins give you a good feel for that time, a lot of visitors will enjoy the view from the heights more than the fortress itself. There are also several religious structures (a monastery and churches) that are well decorated with Byzantine mosaics and colorful frescoes. A good **archaeological museum** is also in town. **Ose Park** has several old steam locomotives and carriages that children will probably find more interesting than adults. Excursions can be made to ancient **Sparta** from Kalamatra, but be forewarned that there is little left from that era as the Spartans, unlike the Athenians, did not build imposing cities.

Tourism Information Office: Polyvriou 5, ☎ (2721) 022 059.

Kéa, Greece

The most northerly of the Cyclades group, this small Aegean island is near the Attic mainland (under 50 miles from Athens' port of Piraeus). It is a quaint, romantic place with fine beaches and old windmills. You'll arrive in the small port of **Korissia**, but most of the good things to see are inland at and around the town of **Ioulida**, which sits atop the island's central mountain. Of special note is the huge **lion carving** in the mountain face above town. Be aware, however, that it is a long walk to get to the lion and people with physical disabilities should not attempt it. The lion dominates even the fine **Venetian-era castle** (which is generally closed to the public). Walking around the castle is a nice way to spend some time. There are some ancient ruins at nearby **Agia Eirene**. The **Moni Panagias Mon-**

astery offers good views. Several nice beaches are set along the road that heads northeast from Korissia.

Tourism Information Office: By the ferry port in Korissia, ☎ (2288) 021 500.

Khíos, Greece

Also known as Chios, this Aegean island measures 30 miles in length and averages about 10 miles across. Located near the Turkish coast, Khíos is a major production center of **wine** and **olives**. Its historic sites range from 11th-century buildings of the Seljuk Turks to the remains of powerful ancient city states that flourished here. The biggest point of interest is **Nea Moni**, a splendid 11th-century monastery with Byzantine mosaics that has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Inside the monastery are the bones of some of the monks that were killed in 1822 during the brutal Turkish occupation. The monastery is about 10 miles west of the main town. Within town are several attractions, including the **Philip Argenti Museum** (the Argenti's were a wealthy local family) that has some nice works of art and the **Kastro**. The latter contains the **Giustiniani Palace Museum**, an art museum noted for its Byzantine frescoes. There is also an **archeological museum** and a **Byzantine museum**. The beaches on this island aren't among the best, but will do if you want a sun and surf break.

Tourism Information Office: Rodokanaki, ☎ (2271) 044 389.

Kos, Greece

The third-biggest island of the Dodecanese group, Kos is a mere three miles from the Turkish coast. The main town isn't that big and you can easily get around on foot or by the **tourist train**, which is actually a tram. The **archaeological museum** is pretty decent. Of greater interest are the numerous archaeological sites, which feature both ancient and medieval buildings. In the former group is the **agora** with its shrine to Aphrodite and the Temple of Hercules. The excellent **Castle of the Knights** dates from the Crusader years. It isn't as good as the one on Rhodes, but is still quite impressive in its massive proportions and its setting on a peninsula between the sea and the circular-shaped harbor. Other sites are scattered around the island. The best of these is 2½ miles from town at **Asklipieion**. These fabulous ruins contain structures on three different levels. Kos also has some nice scenery, lovely little towns and good beaches.

Tourism Information Office: Vasileos Georgiou 1, ☎ (2242) 024 460.

Kotori, Montenegro

Also known as Kotor, I've listed the country as Montenegro but this is in flux. Right now it is part of the old Yugoslavia, which consists of Serbia and Montenegro. Sometime in the near future the name of the country is going to be officially changed to Serbia-Montenegro. Call it what you will, but Kotori is an interesting place no matter where it is! It is unknown by most tourists (even Europeans), but the few ships that call here have found a lovely little place. The **old town** (Stari Grad) is the walled portion of Kotori and dates from the ninth century. Since it is only a little more than two miles long, walking around is the best way to explore. The general atmosphere is of more interest than specific attractions, but the **Maritime Museum** is definitely worth a stop. The setting of Kotori is splendid, as it is situated at the end of the deepest fjord in Europe.

Tourism Information Office: There is no official tourist office but it's hard to get lost. If heading out of town, excursions from your ship are the way to go.

◆ NOTE: For **La Lavandrou**, France, see Hyeres, France. For **Lanarca**, Cyprus, see Limassol, Cyprus. For **Lefkosia**, Cyprus, see Limassol, Cyprus.

Limassol/Lanarca/Lefkosia, Cyprus

This island nation occupies the third-biggest island in the Mediterranean Sea. For some time now it has been divided between a Greek area that covers the larger part of the island and a self-declared independent Turkish area called the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus. Unfortunately, the passionate animosity that is felt between the two groups have defied resolution. There hasn't been any fighting for years and there's even been some progress on the negotiation front. On occasion, cruise ships will dock at the town of **Lanarca**, but it is much more common for them to arrive at **Limassol** (also known as Lemesos). However, the city of most interest is the nearby capital of **Lefkosia** (formerly called Nicosia), some 50 miles from Limassol and 25 miles from Lanarca, so excursions are the way to go. In Limassol you can visit the old town with its 12th-century **castle** and medieval museum. There are a good many more things to see in Lefkosia, all concentrated in the Greek portion of town. Part of the old system of walls is near the dividing line between the two sections of the city.

The old **Venetian walls and ramparts** can be seen gracefully circling the Greek part of the old town. Especially notable are the 11 bastions and the famous **Famagusta Gate**. At the **Cyprus Folk Art Museum** you can see the traditional arts and crafts of the Cypriot community. Across the street is the **Byzantine Museum** and its excellent collection of religious icons. The museum complex also is home to the 17th-century **St. John's Cathedral**. Of special interest inside the cathedral are the vivid frescoes. Nearby is the **Archbishop's Palace** which, though never open to the public, is a stately dwelling that is worth the time to see. The grounds are dominated by a huge statue of Makarios III, the national hero of Greek Cypriots. The **Cyprus Museum** is an excellent archaeology facility that shouldn't be missed. Well-preserved mosaics from an ancient Greek temple as well as thousands of terra cotta figures dating from the seventh century BC make this a special place.

Limassol has docks and terminal facilities.

Tourism Information Office: Aristokyprou 11 (in Lefkosia), ☎ 2244 4264.

Máhon (Balearic Islands), Spain

Máhon, the largest settlement on the island of **Menorca**, serves primarily as a gateway to the delights of the countryside as there isn't a great deal in the town itself. The most popular attraction in Máhon is the **Xoriquer Gin Distillery**, where visitors like to sample the wide variety of products. The most enjoyable thing to do is take an excursion or rent a car (manual transmissions only) and drive around through tiny towns, stopping at some of the small but interesting archaeological sites. The most important are burial chambers from the Stone Age. Many are still covered with huge stone slabs called *talayots*. Although not as large as the monoliths of Stonehenge, they are still impressive, considering the lack of technology at the time they were erected. The sites aren't, for the most part, well developed for visitors (nor are many of them marked) and it's advisable to hire an archaeological guide from the tourist office in Máhon if you're doing it on your own. The other big draw on Menorca are the many beautiful beaches.

There are terminal facilities at the port.

Tourism Information Office: Carrer de sa Rovellada de Dalt 24, ☎ 971 363 790.

Marbella, Spain

Another alternative port of call for the Costa del Sol, this city of about 100,000 residents has a few things to offer the visitor. The mostly pedestrian **old town** features the beautiful **Plaza de los Naranjos** with its 16th-century **town hall**. The **Museo del Grabado** has the works of numerous noted artists, including Picasso and Dalí. One of the more unusual sights is the **Bonsai Museum**, an excellent place to admire the ancient Japanese art of landscaping. Finally, there are many old churches, the best of which is **Iglesia de la Encarnación**. Another option is to take an excursion up the coast to Malaga or, better yet, inland through the scenic mountains to Ronda. There's a good beach in town called **Playa de Venus**, but even better stretches of sand – **Playa de la Fontanilla** and **Playa de Casablanca** – are a little farther away.

Tourism Information Office: Glorietta de la Fontanilla, ☎ 952 771 442.

Marmaris, Turkey

Sun and surf are typical daytime pleasures in Marmaris. The non-cruise set waits for after dark to loosen up and go out for a night on the town. Big yachts dock in the harbor. If you think this sounds unusual for Islamic Turkey, remember that the country has a secular government and tradition. Popular resort areas are like Istanbul in this regard – almost anything goes. You should, however, behave with a greater degree of decorum if you go into less-developed surrounding areas. The best excursions head out on the long and narrow peninsula that juts out into the Aegean west of Marmaris. The city of Marmaris, unfortunately, offers little to see. The large old **castle**, set on a hill that juts into the harbor off Barbaros Caddesi, is a good way to fill up some of your shore time if you remain in town. Another way to pleasantly pass time is to take a *gulet*, a traditional Turkish sailing vessel, which will allow you to visit some of the pretty off-shore islands and coves. The beaches are surprisingly hum-drum in Marmaris.

Tourism Information Office: Iskele Meydani 39, ☎ (0252) 412-1035.

Melilla (North African enclave), Spain

This is another bit of Spanish territory surrounded by Morocco. Although Melilla is even less visited than previously discussed Ceuta, it doesn't lack for points of interest. Melilla's population is divided between Berber Muslims and Spaniards. The Old Town, or **Melilla La Vieja**, is a small walled section that overlooks the Mediterranean Sea. The 16th-century **fortifications** have been nicely restored. One of the most interesting parts of La Vieja are **Las Cuevas del Conventico**. These are a series of caves and tunnels on three different levels that lead to the face of the cliffs on which the city was originally built. First constructed by the ancient Phoenecians, successive rulers of Melilla have added to the tunnel system. There are a couple of worthwhile museums in La Vieja, including the historic **museo de Melilla** and the **Museo Militar**. To this day, Melilla maintains a Spanish army garrison. The New Town is quite a contrast from La Vieja. Constructed mostly in the 19th century, this part of Melilla is centered around the impressive **Plaza de España**. Sun enthusiasts will find that Melilla has several good beaches.

Tourism Information Office: 21 Calle Fortuny, ☎ 956 675 444.

Mitilini, Greece

The main port and town on the large Aegean island of **Lesbos** (alternately spelled Lesvos), the town features a decent **archaeological museum**, many fine churches, a museum about religion, and a museum of **modern art**. There are some interesting traces of ancient civilizations, including a **Greek theater** and a **Roman aquaduct**. But the most impressive old monument is the medieval era **Castle of Justinian**. Other parts of Lesbos have things to see as well. The southern part of the island features resorts and the island's best **beaches**. In the north one will encounter numerous small but extremely pleasant typical Greek towns. **Sigri**, on the western side, is home to the **rock forest**, an area of petrified trees that formed in a volcanic eruption more than 500,000 years ago.

Tourism Information Office: Archipelagous 17, no telephone.

Monemvasia, Greece

This quaint town with a pretty setting is just off the Greek mainland at the southern end of the Peloponnnese Peninsula, about 60 miles

from Sparta. It is connected to the mainland by a causeway. Monemvasia is a good example of rural Greece, but the primary significant historic site is the **fortress** built upon the massive rock nearby. It has been called the "Gibraltar of Greece." The medieval town has many churches. There is also an **archaeological museum**.

Tourism Information Office: There is no tourist office in town.

Motril, Spain

Small Motril, one of a string of coastal towns, is between Malaga and Almeria. There is a rugged beauty to the area, more so than along the main Costa del Sol to the west. However, other than soaking up that famous sunshine, there's little to do in Motril. Both Malaga and Almeria are better destinations. The most viable reason for making Motril a port of call is that it is the closest port to Granada. In less than 40 miles you can be at the Alhambra. That alone makes an itinerary with Motril worth considering. Whether you head for Granada, Malaga or Almeria, it is best done via one of your ship's offered shore excursions.

There are terminal facilities.

Tourism Information Office: There is no official tourist office. However, since you'll likely be on an excursion from Motril, this shouldn't present a problem.

Oporto, Portugal

Just six miles inland from the Atlantic along a pretty gorge in the northern part of Portugal, Oporto (also known as Porto) is adjacent to the town of Leixões, where your cruise ship will actually leave you. The town and the surrounding region is best known for the famous port wine. With more than a quarter-million people, Oporto is the second-largest city in Portugal. The old part of town has many interesting sights. The **Torre & Igreja dos Clérigos** has 225 steps leading to the top of the tower. For those with ambition, the effort will be rewarded with a fabulous view. The **Sé** is a huge fortress-like cathedral that sits on Oporto's highest hill. The city has many other beautiful and historic churches. The late 19th-century **Palacío da Bolsa** is built in the neo-classical style. It harkens back to an earlier era of palaces. Tours take you through some exquisite salons. Oporto has no shortage of good museums. In fact, you could easily spend a day exploring them. Art lovers will appreciate the **Museum of Contemporary Art** and the **Museu Soares dos Reis**. More esoteric is the

Tram Museum. Perhaps of most interest given the city's long association with wine is the new **Museu do Vinho do Porto**, which should tell you just about everything there is to know about Oporto and wine. Finally, the **Jardim do Palacío** is a nice place for a stroll. Excursions on the attractive **Rio Douro** lasting less than an hour are a good way to pass some time. You might also want to take a look at some of the bridges crossing the river. The best view, a fabulous one at that, is from **Vila Nova de Gaia**, reached by crossing Ponte de Dom Luís I.

Tourism Information Office: Rua Clube dos Fenianos 25, ☎ (223) 393 470.

Palamos, Spain

North of Barcelona on the Costa Brava (Wild Coast), the rugged and rocky promontories that jut out into the sea hide tranquil and beautiful bayside beaches. A walk around the 13th-century town is a pleasant way to spend a short time. The town rises high above the harbor. If you're here in the afternoon, take in the colorful and boisterous **fish market**. There is no way, unless you plan to spend some time on the beach, that you could spend more than a few hours in Palamos itself. Consider a shore excursion to **Girona** if it is offered. That hillside town has a medieval atmosphere in its narrow maze of streets. The **Cathedral**, **Arab Baths** and **Jewish Quarter** are indications of its diverse history. There are also several good museums.

Cruise ships will tie up at the dock.

Tourism Information Office: There is no tourist office in Palamos and since you're likely to visit Girona via shore excursion, you shouldn't need the tourist office in Girona.

Paros, Greece

Another member of the Cyclades group of islands, Paros has many small and lovely villages, as well as uncrowded beaches and resort areas. The main town has some interesting Greek churches. One of the nicest places to visit during the summer is **Petaloudes**, known as the Valley of the Butterflies because of the countless numbers of these colorful creatures that fill the area. The main town and port is **Parikia** and here you'll find a fortress (**kastro**) built by the Venetians in the 13th century; not much is left. The fourth-century church of **Panagia Ekatontapyliani** is notable for its beautiful marble columns and exquisite carvings. The **ancient cemetery** is of some interest. Paros has both a **Byzantine Museum** and an **archaeological**

museum. There isn't much else of interest around the island, but you will find many good **beaches**.

Tourism Information Office: There is an information kiosk at the port.

Patmos, Greece

One of the Dodecanese Islands, Patmos is a hot spot for beach-goers, but those who love scenery, history and architecture will also find something to please them. The main sights are located, respectively, one and two miles south of the Skala Port in the town of Hora. These are the **Byzantine Monasteries of St. John the Theologian** and **St. John the Apocalypse**. A visit to the first monastery should include time at the **Grotto of Chora**, the cave where St. John penned the Book of Revelations. The Apocalypse Monastery is of less historical significance, but it has a wonderful collection of ecclesiastic treasures. Hora is the archtypical Greek town with its white-washed buildings. Although Patmos doesn't get the same number of visitors as some of the other Greek islands, you'll find plenty of markets to satisfy your shopping urge.

Tourism Information Office: At the port in Skala, ☎ (2247) 031 666.

◆ NOTE: For **Ponza**, Italy, see Gaeta, Italy.

Portovenere, Italy

Not far from Portofino, Portovenere shares many of the same attributes of the better-known Italian Riviera resort. The town itself, as well as several other surrounding towns, are all delightful villages where roaming around is the main way to spend the day. Until recently it was a rather isolated area and, even today, it is not overrun with visitors. Portovenere boasts colorful houses on steep cliffs. Many of the town's streets are actually stairs. In-town highlights are the 12th-century **Chiesa di San Lorenzo** and the 16th-century **Castello Doria**. The fortress itself isn't as good as its beautiful terraced gardens or the great views. Speaking of views, head out to the end of the promontory to **Grotta Arpaia**, where you have a view of the **Cinque Terre** (Five Lands) that is nothing short of fabulous. Excursions to the famous five towns of this isolated region are also a possibility as are **boat rides** to the small and charming off-shore islands of **Palmaria, Tino** and **Tinetto**.

Tourism Information Office: There is no official tourist office in Portovenere.

Port Said, Egypt

This city of more than 400,000 people didn't exist until 1859 when construction of the Suez Canal began. The canal, which is the big tourist attraction, opened 10 years later. If you want to see the **Suez Canal**, join one of the guided excursions. Within Port Said you can take a look at the green-domed **Suez Canal House**, a building that was for many years *the* place to go for the best canal views without having to leave town. Sadly, it's now closed. Port Said does have two museums. The **National Museum** covers a broad swath of Egyptian history dating back before the pharaohs. The **Military Museum** traces important conflicts covering thousands of years with an emphasis on more recent struggles, including the two Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. You should also spend some time wandering around to admire the fine turn-of-the-century colonial architecture. Those interested in taking a side-trip to Cairo from Port Said should refer back to the sidebar following the description of Alexandria, page 137.

There are terminal facilities in Port Said.

Tourism Information Office: 8 Sharia Palestine, ☎ (066) 235 289.

◆ NOTE: For **Porto-Vecchio** (Corsica), France, see Bonifacio (Corsica), France.

Port Vendres, France

Port Vendres is not far north of the Spanish border, in an area that is known as French Catalan. In fact, many people are more Catalan than French and you might think you're not in France in some places. Port Vendres is, in a sense, the western end of the French Riviera, but it is also considered to be part of a region known as the **Vermilion Coast**, or Côte Vermeille. Port Vendres finds itself in what most people consider the nicest stretch of the Côte Vermeille. It is an attractive place with several small ports and resorts, and far less crowded than the more famous Riviera ports to the northeast. A port call in Vendres can make for a pleasant afternoon of strolling along the waterfront and in winding alleyways. More rewarding are a number of excursions that can take you to surrounding towns and to see some of the better scenery close up. One of the closest is the **castle in Collioure**. Farther, but still possible depending upon the length of your port call, is the journey to **Carcassonne**. Here you'll find one of the best-preserved (and, to Americans, among the least-known) walled cities in Europe. The fortifications, consisting of beautifully crenellated

walls, originated in the fifth century, although most of what you'll see today are excellent restorations done in the second half of the 19th century. Guided trips can also take you to **Perpignan**, the region's largest community, with its local museums, a palace and a large cathedral.

Tourism Information Office: 3 Quai Pierre Gorges, ☎ (04) 68 820754.

Propriano (Corsica), France

This town doesn't have nearly as much of interest as many other Corsican ports of call. You can take a nice little stroll along the main street (Ave. Napoleon) and see the **war memorial**. Somewhat better are **boat trips** along the coast, although other stretches of the Corsican coastline are better. The main activities in Propriano are weighted heavily in favor of those who like outdoor activities. Besides several good **beaches** in the area, Propriano offers many watersports, including **diving**. Land-based activities include **horseback riding** in the countryside.

Tourism Information Office: At the marina, ☎ (04) 95 760149.

Rab, Croatia

A sizable island off the Croatian coast with a port town of the same name, Rab has seven other quaint communities. The port town is surrounded by **walls** from the Middle Ages. It's easy to get around on foot since the town is on a narrow promontory and is only a few blocks wide. In fact, there are only three parallel streets running its entire length. Inside the walls you'll find a wealth of beautiful churches and fine palaces. The biggest ecclesiastical structure is a 13th-century Romanesque-style **cathedral**, with a high bell tower that was added several hundred years later. Most of the splendid former palaces were constructed by the Venetians and several can be visited. The most interesting is the **Prince's Palace**. There are impressive gates to the walled town and the whole place exudes history. Other than tourism, Rab's residents make their living primarily through fishing. You'll see many small fishing vessels in the harbor along with the fancy yachts of visitors. Boat tours can be taken to some of the nearby islands. **Watersports** are readily available.

Tourism Information Office: Donja ulica 2, no telephone.

Rabat, Morocco

Rabat has many similarities to Tangier, so its good that cruise itineraries don't visit both places. Not that Rabat isn't interesting, but you could get a bad case of *déja vu* should you visit both. Rabat's **Medina** (smaller and not as old as the one in Tangier) is a great place to experience a **carpet market**. Rabat's **kasbah** is brilliantly constructed at the top of a bluff that overlooks the Atlantic Ocean. Not only is the locale very impressive, but the **Museum of Moroccan Arts**, that now calls the palace home, is an excellent facility. Back in the Medina you should visit the **Tower of Hassan** (Tour Hassan). This is the minaret of what was to have been a grand mosque. It was destroyed by an earthquake before it was ever finished. Also on the site is the elaborate **Mausoleum of Mohammed V**. Finally, a visit to Rabat should include some time for the remains of the Roman city of **Sala**.

Tourist Information Office: rue al-Abtal, ☎ (037) 730 562.

Samos, Greece

Samos, another fairly large Aegean island just off the Turkish coast opposite Kusadasi (local ferries connect the two), is the name both of the island and the largest town and port. The known history of Samos dates back before the fifth century BC. This 300-square-mile island is dominated by the steeply rising 4,701-foot **Mt. Kerketéus**. The **archaeological museum** here is one of the best in the Greek islands. The old part of town, called **Ano Vathi**, is worth exploring. In the town of Pythagorio, a major resort area, is the **Monastery of the Virgin of the Grotto** and the 19th-century **Castle of Lykourgos Logothetis**. A local history museum is set in the town hall. Also of interest is the **Evpalinos Tunnel**. Built in 524 BC to carry water, the tunnel is quite an engineering feet at more than 3,000 feet in length. It is open to the public but you have to be thin and athletic to explore it. Easier to see is **Ireon**, touted in Greek mythology as the birthplace of the important goddess Hera.

Tourism Information Office: Plateia Pythagorou, ☎ (2273) 028 530.

◆ NOTE: For **Sanary-Sur Mer**, France, see Cassis, France.

Savona, Italy

The huge commercial port here belies the fact that Savona is a town of only 60,000 people. Parts of the town are quite pretty, as this is along the Italian Riviera. However, for cruise passengers, its major claim to fame is that most of Costa Cruises' itineraries embark and/or debark here. Savona is only about 30 miles from Genoa, so if you happen to be in town for a day and are looking for something more to do, refer to that city description, page 176, for places to see. Savona has a small **medieval** section. The wonderful Baroque-style **Cattedrale di Nostra Signora Assunta** is the major sight, primarily because of its beautiful Sistine Chapel. It's not as spectacular as the one in the Vatican, but is still an eye-pleaser. Also worth a look is the 16th-century **Fortezza del Priamàr**. The fortifications aren't that great, but inside the walls are an **art gallery**, **sculpture museum**, and an **archaeological museum**.

Tourism Information Office: Via Guidobono 23, ☎ (019) 840 2321.

Serifos, Greece

The main town on the Cycladic island of the same name, this charming and pretty town is, like many in the islands, situated on top of a steep mountain and the houses are all painted white. While Santorini and Mykonos are usually regarded as typical Greek islands, Serifos can justify its own claim for that title. The advantage here, for some, is that it is still far less commercialized. Don't fret, though – you can still find places to shop. The main points of interest are the old houses, the 15th-century **Venetian fortress** and a small but decent **archaeological museum**.

Tourism Information Office: On the waterfront, ☎ (2281) 051 466.

Sifnos, Greece

Another one of the Cyclades group, Sifnos is a generally quiet island compared to many of its sister islands. It is known as a center of Greek arts and crafts and, hence, **shopping** is the major visitor activity. The port town is **Kamares**, which has little to see. The main town is **Apollonia**, about three miles away. It has a **museum of popular art**. Near Apollonia is **Aretemonas**, an idyllic clifftop village. This is where Sifnos' **archaeological museum** can be found. Sifnos has several good **beaches**.

Tourism Information Office: In the port area of Kamares, ☎ (2284) 031 977.

Skiathos, Greece

This Aegean island is part of the less-visited Sporades Islands group. The majority of tourists here are European. It's basically known as a good resort area with great beaches and excellent hotels. When it comes to sightseeing, the big attraction is **Moni Evangelistrios,** a fascinating 18th-century fortress squeezed into a gorge that is more than 1,200 feet above the sea. The 1540 **kastro** is perched atop the rocky landscape. It once had more than 300 structures, but few remain. Views from the site are outstanding. Within the town is a museum that was once the home of Greek author Alexandros Papadramantis. Popular recreational pursuits on Skiathos include **diving** and **hiking**.

Tourism Information Office: Papadiamanti, no telephone.

Sochi, Russia

Sochi is nestled snugly between the sea and the foothills of the dramatic Caucasus Mountains. Its isolated position in the far eastern end of the Black Sea makes it almost completely unknown to Western travelers. It might well stay that way since, at least until now, only a tiny number of cruises call here and those are usually the small luxury yacht-type lines. The Soviets decided that this would be a good place for a health resort because of its natural mineral springs. They began to develop it in the 1930s. Although it never reached its full potential, it's an interesting little place that's now becoming increasingly commercialized in the new Russia, complete with flea markets and tacky tourist traps. The **Art Museum** and the **Town Historic Museum** are both worth visiting. **Navaginskoye Fortress** is the principle historic attraction, but you may also choose to visit the **Arboretum** along Kurortny Prospekt. The best way to see this multi-leveled facility is to take the cable car to the top and work your way down on foot.

There are terminal facilities for ship passengers.

Tourism Information Office: Chernomorskaya ul 3, ☎ (8622) 992 082.

Split, Croatia

This city encompasses more than 1,700 years of often tumultuous history. In the days when it was part of Yugoslavia, Split was one of the most popular destinations in the Balkan region, especially among Europeans. Although it has returned to the mainstream tourism routes, cruise ships are far more likely to call on Dubrovnik, farther south on the Dalmatian coast, because it can handle bigger ships and has more to see. But Split is not without some spectacular places. The most important historic site is the beautiful third century Roman fortress, **Diocletian's Palace**. This huge structure has towers at each of its four corners. Inside are several temples and other remains. The walled city also contains a **cathedral** that originally was built as a mausoleum for Emperor Diocletian. Also of interest is the **old town hall**. Split boasts a number of museums, including separate facilities on **ethnography** and **archaeology**. The **Me trovi Gallery** is an art museum. Finally, the former **Papalic Palace** now serves as the Split **history museum**.

There are terminal facilities.

Tourism Information Office: Peristyle, ☎ 342 606.

Tangier, Morocco

Tangier (or Tanger) sits like Agadir, just outside the Mediterranean beyond the Pillars of Hercules. The town has a wild feel to it, although as the tourism facilities mature it becomes easier for visitors to get around and see things. The city has a modern section and an old one, the walled **Medina**. The Medina is the heart of the city and nowhere is there more activity than in the main square, **Petit Socco**. Just a few blocks away are the lovely **Church of the Immaculate Conception** and the **Spanish Church** on the rue as-Siaghin. Just outside the northwest end of the walls, off Grand Socco, are Tangier's primary **mosque** and the **Mendoubia Gardens**. But the single biggest attraction in Tangier is just north of the Medina. The famous **Kasbah** is the hilltop location of the sultan's palace known as the **Dar el-Makzhen**. (Kasbah, like Medina, is another generic term that you'll see in many Moroccan cities.) The palace was constructed in the 17th century and has now been converted into a wonderful museum of Moroccan craft arts. But the sumptuous surroundings, including the courtyards, gates and the beautiful Sultan's Gardens, will not let you forget that this was once a royal palace. On the north

side of the Kasbah walls is a good vantage point that looks out over the Atlantic side of the Straits of Gibraltar.

Ships under 800 feet can tie up at the dock.

Tourism Information Office: 29 Blvd. Pasteur, ☎ (039) 948 050.

Tarragona, Spain

This medium-sized city dates back to the Roman colony founded in the third century BC, and many ruins remain scattered throughout Tarragona. The tourist office can provide you with a brochure called the *Ruta Arqueològica Urbana*, a guide to more than 30 different ancient sites. Among the most impressive of the Roman ruins are the **amphitheater**, the large **Necropolis**, and the **Forum**. Contained inside of the U-shaped walls of the old city are a number of other attractions, including the wonderful Romanesque and Gothic 12th-century **cathedral**. It contains a pretty cloister and the whole place is filled with artistic treasures. Tarragona boasts a number of fine museums, including the **National Archaeological Museum** and the **Museum of History of Tarragona**, which incorporates four ancient sites. There is also a **museum of modern art** and the **Museu d'Armes Antiques** for those who like old weapons. Tarragona has a number of very nice **beaches**.

Just about all ships can tie up at the docks.

Tourism Information Office: Carrer Major 39, ☎ 977 245 064.

Tartous, Syria

Because the United States and Syria don't see eye-to-eye, even fewer ships stop in Tartous than in Beirut. At present, only European-owned cruise lines and those that cater to Europeans come here, and even they don't visit in large numbers. Regardless, Tartous is a pleasant enough place to see. The **medieval walls** that enclose the **old city** are the main sight. Because the tourism industry is not highly developed in this area, and because Americans may not always be among the most welcome visitors, I strongly recommend a guided shore excursion for this port. Excursions to **Damascus** are sometimes available, but the travel time is rather long, allowing little time to see the city. You might be better staying in Tartous. You may sometimes see the name of the city spelled as Tartus.

Tourism Information Office: Sharia Khaled ibn-al Walid, ☎ 223 448.

Thessaloniki, Greece

Situated in the northern part of the Greek mainland (in the region known as Macedonia), Thessaloniki is the second-largest city in the country, with more than 750,000 residents. You can easily fill a day here taking in historic sites and museums. There are several notable churches (including **Agios Dimitrios, Panagia Ahiropitos** and **Osios David**). The stunning **White Tower** was built in the 15th century and served as an Ottoman prison for wayward Janissaries (Christians converted to Islam in their youth and who were then forced to serve as the Sultan's private guard). If you climb the spiral staircase to the top you'll be rewarded with fine views. There are some Roman ruins, including the **Agora** and a **triumphal arch**. The **kastro** and its surrounding ramparts are quite a sight. They can be reached by steep stairs or by bus. Inside the kastro is the **Eptapyrgio**, a former prison. Among Thessaloniki's many fine museums are the **archaeological museum** and the notable **Museum of Byzantine Culture**. Other museums are the **Museum of Ancient Greek & Byzantine Instruments**, the **Museum of the Macedonian Struggle** (about the fight to liberate Greece from its Ottoman overlords), and the small but interesting **Museum of Jewish Presence**.

Tourism information office: In the passenger terminal at the port, ☎ (2310) 500 310.

Toulon, France

Not that many ships call on Toulon, even though it is a fairly large city. That's because the entire place is a bit rundown and seems very much out of place on the Côte d'Azur. Cruise passengers that arrive wind up taking excursions elsewhere, especially to nearby St.-**Tropez**. If you do decide to stay in town, there are several museums to visit, including the **Toulon Museum** (Musée de Toulon) and the **Marine Museum** (Musée de la Marine), a decent naval museum housed in a building that once served as an arsenal. Even today, Toulon is the home of France's main Mediterranean naval base. The best way to spend some time, though, is to take the cable car up to **Mont Faron**, which offers a fantastic view. From this vantage pint even Toulon looks pretty good. Near the summit is the **Tour Beaumont** (Beaumont Tower), a memorial to those who were killed in the Allied invasion that occurred nearby in August of 1944.

The port docks can accommodate all ships and there are terminal facilities.

Tourism Information Office: Place Raimu, ☎ (04) 94 185300.

Tripoli, Libya

With more than 1.7 million residents, Tripoli is Libya's largest city. It is an oasis from the vast desert to the south and combines much that is old with many new features. It is also a city of many markets. From a visitor standpoint (and you are encouraged to take a guided shore excursion here), the **Medina**, or the old city, is of most interest. The huge complex known as **Assai Al-Hamra** (Tripoli Castle) is where you'll spend a lot of your time. About half of it is the remains of the fortress which had its major construction period beginning in the seventh century. The rest of the space is taken up by the **Jamahiriyn Museum**, one of the finest in the Mediterranean region. Its nearly 50 different galleries cover art from pre-historic times through contemporary. There are also natural history exhibits. Also in the Medina are numerous mosques (the **Ahmed Pasha Karamanli** and **Othman Pasha** are the most notable), small ancient Roman ruins such as arches and columns, and markets.

Tourism Information Office: There is no tourism information office in the sense that we know it, but you might get some help by contacting the General People's Commission on Tourism by the ferry port, ☎ (021) 360 3405.

Varna, Bulgaria

Although many visitors immediately run to the popular beach, Varna is an interesting place with things to see, most of them right near the port, on or near a street called Primorski. The fine **Maritime Museum**, in attractive **Primorski Park**, documents the role that the sea has played in Varna's history. Children will especially enjoy Varna's **Aquarium** (conveniently located right behind the Maritime Museum). The **Museum of History and Art** is housed in a Renaissance-style building that used to serve as a school for girls; it has a large collection of beautiful religious icons. Most of the museum's exhibits are on regional archaeology. On the large plaza known as the **Nezavismost** is the brightly colored **Opera House** and the imposing **Assumption Cathedral**. On the far side of the plaza is Varna's main market. Depending upon when you arrive, it could be a hive of activity. Another good museum choice is the fine **Ethnographic Museum**, which will give you a better insight into traditional Bulgarian life and culture through its collection of art and artifacts. Finally, Varna's ancient history is recounted at the the remains of the **Roman Baths**. Nearby is another group of baths. Just

north of the baths is the **Roman Thermae**. Also in this area is the **City Historical Museum**.

Tourism information office: There is no official tourist office.

Volos, Greece

Set on the northern mainland astride the pretty Gulf of Volos, this city of more than 110,000 people (one of the largest in Greece) has, in the past few years, seen a significant increase in the number of cruise ships. That's fine, because it has several places of interest in addition to an extensive waterfront that makes for a great place to take a stroll. The **Archaeological Museum** has a respectable collection. For a change of pace (and for something better), visit the **Kitsos Makris Folk Art Center**. Exhibits and demonstrations vividly portray the diverse folk arts of Greece. Volos is also a gateway to many interesting excursions. The nearby ancient cities of **Pagasae** and **Demetrias**, though not well known, are good choices. But better still – if you only have time for one trip, opt for this – and more unusual is **Meteora**, where numerous monasteries are perched precariously atop cliffs (actually rock pillars) that tower more than a thousand feet above the sea. Meteora must rank with the most unusual sights anywhere and an opportunity to see it should not be missed. Although you can get to most of these "out of town" destinations by public transportation, a guided excursion is the easiest and best choice for visitors to Volos.

The surprisingly large port will accommodate ships at the dock and there are terminal facilities.

Tourism Information Office: Oktovriou 179, ☎ (2421) 039 065.

Zadar, Croatia

On a long and narrow peninsula, historic Zadar is one of many Croatian coastal cities with much to offer the visitor. Ecclesiastical art, history and architecture are the focus of the old town area. The highlights are beautiful **St. Donatus Church** and the adjacent **Museum of Church Art**, which contains many priceless works. Also of interest are the **Cathedral of St. Anastasia** and a **Franciscan Monastery**. Zadar's other points of interest include the **Archaeological Museum** and the **National Museum**, which provides a decent overview of Croatian and regional history and culture. The **fortifications** that overlook the harbor aren't as extensive or impressive as many others

along the Adriatic coast but are, nevertheless, worth some brief exploration.

A new terminal facility was completed in 2004.

Tourism Information Office: Smiljani a 4, ☎ (023) 212 222.

Zakinthos, Greece

How appropriate that we end this section with yet another Aegean island featuring typical Greek towns. The wonderfully beautiful Zakinthos is best known for its fine **beaches**. However, among the sights are a good **Byzantine Museum** and the **Museum of Solomos** (Solomos was a poet and the author of the Greek National Anthem). About 1½ miles from the main town is a **Venetian fortress**.

Tourism Information Office: Lombardou 62, ☎ (2695) 027 367.

THE SUNNY ATLANTIC ISLANDS

Many of the islands off the coast of North Africa that are provinces of Spain and Portugal are immensely popular vacation destinations, especially for sun-starved northern Europeans. Specifically, the Canary Islands, Madeira and the Azores are delightful places to visit. This area is beyond the scope of cruising the Mediterranean. Some itineraries do include the closer Canary Islands among their ports of call. But they, and the other groups, are mostly visited either on trans-Atlantic cruises or on cruises devoted mostly to the islands themselves. (P&O cruises is especially noted for excellent Atlantic Islands trips from Southampton, England.) You wouldn't be making a bad choice if you decided to someday take a trip to these delightful islands. Additional information can be requested from the national tourist offices of Spain and Portugal.

The **Canary Islands** (Islas Canarias) comprise seven major islands. The most important are Tenerife, where the city of Santa Cruz de Tenerife is located, and Gran Canaria. The largest city on that island is Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, not to be confused with Palma de Mallorca. Other oft-visited islands in the group are Fuerteventura, Lanzarote and La Palma. Tenerife is in the middle of the group; it is less than 250 miles off the coast of Morocco. The mountainous islands are volcanic and feature many high peaks. The biggest one, Pico de Tenerife, reaches 12,172 feet. The Canaries enjoy a mild and equitable climate. There is little

rainfall and most of that occurs during the winter months. Resorts line the beautiful beaches and there is plenty of recreation, especially watersports.

Portuguese **Madeira** is a smaller group of islands about 750 miles southeast of Lisbon. The main island is Madeira, location of Funchal, its largest city. The climate, scenery (one mountain rises to 6,059 feet) and general orientation of this island group are much like that found in the Canaries.

The **Azores** (*Açores* in Portuguese) shares many similarities with the other island groups. However, these nine islands are way out in the Atlantic, about 1,000 miles due east of Lisbon.

Addendum

National Tourist Offices in the US

Many countries with two offices shown below may have additional office locations. Due to space considerations, I have listed only two main offices.

Bulgaria

www.mtt.govrn.bg/tour-info
Bulgarian Tourist Information Center
41 East 42nd Street, Suite 508
New York, NY 10017
☎ (212) 573-5530

Croatia

www.htz.hr
Croatian National Tourist Office
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4003
New York, NY 10118
☎ (800) 829-4416

Cyprus

www.cyprustourism.org
Cyprus Tourism
13 East 40th Street
New York, NY 10016
☎ (212) 683-5290

Egypt

www.egypttourism.org

Egyptian Tourist Authority
630 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1706
New York, NY 10111
☎ (212) 332-2570

Egyptian Tourist Authority
8333 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 215
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
☎ (323) 653-8815

France

www.francetourism.com

French Govt. Tourist Office
444 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022
☎ (212) 838-7855

French Govt. Tourist Office
9454 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 715
Beverly Hills, CA 90212
☎ (310) 276-2835

Gibraltar

www.gibraltar.gi/tourism; e-mail tourism@gibraltar.gi.
No office in the United States.

Greece

www.gnto.gr
Greek National Tourist Office
645 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10022
☎ (212) 421-5777

Israel

www.goisrael.com

Israel Govt. Tourist Office
800 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10017
☎ (212) 499-5650

Israel Govt. Tourist Office
6380 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1718
Los Angeles, CA 90048
☎ (213) 658-7462

Italy

www.enit.it

Italian Govt. Travel Office
630 Fifth Ave., Suite 1565
New York, NY 10111
☎ (212) 245-5095

Italian Govt. Travel Office
12400 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 550
Los Angeles, CA 90025
☎ (310) 820-1898

Lebanon

www.arab.net/lebanon
The National Council of Tourism in Lebanon does not maintain an office in the US. You may contact the Lebanese Embassy at:
2560 28th Street NW
Washington, DC 20008
☎ (202) 939-6300

Malta

www.visitmalta.com
Malta Government Travel Office
350 5th Avenue, Suite 4412
New York, NY 10118
☎ (800) 753-9696

Monaco

www.monacotourism.com
Monaco Tourism
565 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10017
☎ (212) 286-3330

Morocco

www.tourism-in-morocco.com
The Moroccan National Tourist Office has no US office. You may contact the Moroccan Embassy at:
1601 21st Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
☎ (202) 262-7979

Portugal

www.icep.pt
ICEP-Portuguese Tourist Office
590 Fifth Avenue, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10036
☎ (212) 719-3985

Romania

Romanian Government Travel Office
14 East 38th Street
New York, NY 10016
☎ (212) 545-8484

Spain

www.okspain.org
Tourist Office of Spain
666 Fifth Avenue, 35th Floor
New York, NY 10103
☎ (212) 265-8822

Tourist Office of Spain
8383 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 960
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
☎ (323) 658-7188

Syria

www.syriatourism.org
The Syrian tourist organization does not maintain an office in the US. For information you may contact the Syrian Embassy at:
2215 Wyoming Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008
☎ (202) 232-6313

Tunisia

www.tourismtunisia.com
Tunisia does not have a tourist office in the US. You may contact their embassy at:
1515 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20005
☎ (202) 862-1850

Turkey

www.turkey.org
Turkish Tourist Office
821 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
☎ (212) 687-2194

Ukraine

www.ukremb.com
There is no Ukraine tourist office in the US. You may contact their embassy at:
3350 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20007
☎ (202) 333-0606

Cruise Lines

For general cruise information, including details about the various lines, contact:

Cruise Lines International Association
500 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10110
☎ (212) 921-0066
www.cruising.org

Celebrity Cruises
1050 Port Boulevard
Miami, FL 33124
☎ (800) 437-3111
www.celebritycruises.com

Costa Cruise Line
200 South Park Road
Hollywood, FL 33021-8541
☎ (800) 462-6782
www.costacruises.com

Crystal Cruises
2049 Century Park East
Los Angeles, CA 90067
☎ (800) 446-6620
www.crystalcruises.com

Cunard
6100 Blue Lagoon Drive
Miami, FL 33126
☎ (800) 728-6273
www.cunard.com

First European Cruises
95 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016
☎ (888) 983-8767
www.first-european.com

Fred. Olsen Cruises (Eurocruises)
33 Little W. 12th Street
New York, NY 10014
☎ (800) 688-3876
www.eurocruises.com
www.fredolsencruises.co.uk

Holland America Line
300 Elliott Avenue West
Seattle, WA 98119
☎ (800) 426-0327
www.hollandamerica.com

Mediterranean Shipping Cruises
420 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10018
☎ (800) 666-9333
www.msccruises.com

Norwegian Cruise Line
7665 Corporate Center Drive
Miami, FL 33126
☎ (800) 327-7030
www.ncl.com

Orient Lines
1510 SE 17th Street
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33316
☎ (800) 333-7300
www.orientlines.com

Princess Cruises
24305 Town Center Drive
Santa Clarita, CA 91355
☎ (800) 774-6237
www.princess.com

Radisson Seven Seas Cruises
600 Corporate Drive
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33334
☎ (800) 477-7500
www.rssc.com

Royal Caribbean Int'l
1050 Caribbean Way
Miami, FL 33132
☎ (800) 327-6700
www.royalcaribbean.com
www.rccl.com

Royal Olympic Cruises
805 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022
☎ (800) 872-6400
www.royalolympiccruises.com

Seabourn Cruise Line
6100 Blue Lagoon Drive
Miami, FL 33126
☎ (800) 929-9391
www.seabourn.com

Silversea Cruises
110 E. Broward Blvd.
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
☎ (800) 722-9955
www.silversea.com

Star Clippers
4101 Salzedo Street
Coral Gables, FL 33146
☎ (800) 442-0551
www.starclippers.com

Windstar
300 Elliott Avenue West
Seattle, WA 98119
☎ (800) 258-7245
www.windstarcruises.com

Car Rental Companies

Auto Europe
☎ (888) 223-5555
www.autoeurope.com

Avis
☎ (800) 230-4898
www.avis.com

Europcar (National Car Rental)
☎ (877) 940-6900
www.europcar.com

Hertz
☎ (800) 654-3001
www.hertz.com

Kemwel
☎ (800) 576-1590
www.kemwel.com

Sixty Car Rental
☎ (800) 800-6000 (Dollar Rent-a-Car is their US travel partner)
www.e-sixt.com

International Ferry Lines

Few of these ferry lines have a United States representative. The best way to secure information about their services is to browse their websites (most of which are English language). If you wish to speak with them over the phone, check their website for a number to call.

Company	Website	Area covered
Adriatica de Navigazione	www.adriatica.it	Croatia/Greece-Italy
Bland Shipping	www.blandgroup.gi	Gibraltar-Morocco
Buquebus	www.buquebus.com	Spain-Morocco
Comarit	www.comarit.com	Spain-Morocco
Compagnie Tunisienne de Navigation	www.tunisienet.com/ctn	France/Italy-Tunisia
Euroferrys	www.euroferrys.com	Spain-Morocco
Grandi Navi Velocia	www.condeminos.es	Spain-Italy
Hellenic Mediterranean	www.ferries.gr/hml	Greece-Italy
Islena de Navigacion		Spain-Morocco
Jadrolinija Line	www.jadrolinija.tel.hr	Croatia-Italy
Limadet	www.dsmaroc.com	Spain-Morocco
Losinjska Plovidba	www.island-losinj.com	Croatia-Italy
Meridiano Line		Italy-Malta
Minoan Lines	www.minoan.gr	Italy-Greece
Poseidon Lines	www.ferries.gr/poseidon	Greece-Cyprus-Israel
Salamis Lines	www.ferries.gr/salamis	Greece-Cyprus-Israel
SEM	www.sem.hr/english	Croatia-Italy
Strintzis Lines	www.strintzis.gr	Italy-Greece
Tirrenia Lines	www.tirrenia.com	Italy-Tunisia
Trasmediterranea	www.trasmediterranea.es	Spain-Morocco
Turkish Maritime Lines	www.tdi.com.tr	Turkey-Italy
UKR Ferry Shipping	www.ukrferry.com/eng	Ukraine-Bulgaria-Turkey
Virtu Ferries	www.virtuferries.com	Italy (Sicily)-Malta

Major Hotel Chains

American

Best Western
☎ (800) 528-1234
www.bestwestern.com

Choice Hotels (Comfort Inn, Quality Inn)
☎ (800) 424-6423
www.choicehotels.com

Holiday Inn
☎ (800) 465-4329
www.holiday-inn.com

Sheraton Hotels
☎ (800) 325-3535
www.sheraton.com

Foreign

ACCOR Group

This group includes numerous hotel brands. The most popular and widespread are (from least to most expensive) Ibis Hotels, www.ibishotel.com; Novotel, www.novotel.com; Mercure Hotels, www.mercure.com; Sofitel, www.sofitel.com. ☎ (800) 221-4542 for all Accor properties.

Golden Tulip Hotels
☎ (800) 344-1212
www.goldentulip.com

Minotel
No US office
www.minotel.com

Hotel Booking Services

There are countless on-line reservation services booking European hotels. I have found that the best approach is to search the Web for "Hotels + country name." Try **www.hotelbook.com**, which represents a number of major chain properties throughout Europe, as well as scores of independent places. **Utell** is another good one, www.utell.com, ☎ 800-448-8355.

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